Interview with Ernest V. Siracusa

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR ERNEST V. SIRACUSA

Interviewed by: Hank Zivetz

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Q: Before we examine some of the more significant periods of your years in the Foreign Service, may I ask you what prompted you to choose a career in diplomacy?

SIRACUSA: Well, that's easy to answer. I began with the idea of being a lawyer but shifted to petroleum engineer during my first year in college when I became fascinated with my first course in geology. Also, as my father was in the oil well tool business it seemed a logical objective. However, at the end of my freshman year, I went to Europe with my father, who had been an immigrant to the United States from Italy (alone at age 12) and was returning for his first visit after 45 years. And there my life changed when I met a cousin (by marriage) who was a Vice Consul in Milan. I was so attracted by his lifestyle and the glamour of the Foreign Service as I saw it, that I decided on the spot to study for that career, which I did at Stanford University.

After graduation in 1940 I took the Foreign Service exam at age 21 and, luckily, passed and was admitted after oral examination in January, 1941.

Q: Well, that's an interesting way. You started out with tours in Mexico and Central America and then had service in the U.S. Navy during the Second World War and then had a year at MIT as a graduate student in economics. Afterwards, you were assigned to

Buenos Aires as a political officer. This was in the final years of the Peron period. Could you share with us some of your impressions of the political atmosphere in Argentina in the mid-1950s?

SIRACUSA: That's a big subject, as you well know, but I will try to hit some highlights without, I hope, rambling too much. I did go to Buenos Aires. About September, 1952 if I remember correctly—arriving in October, 1952, to be exact. (it took about ten days to get there by ship) That was about a month or a bit more after Evita Peron's funeral.

Our Ambassador, Albert Nufer, a career officer) had been my boss in Washington where I worked as Officer in Charge, Central America and Panama Affairs, after finishing my courses at MIT. When Nufer was assigned to Buenos Aires, he asked if I would like to go with him as the number two officer in the political section and I happily accepted. Given our past association and the basis for my being there, I enjoyed a special trust of the Ambassador not exactly commensurate with my middle rank in the Embassy.

Ambassador Nufer had arrived in Argentina just in the week of Evita Peron's death and funeral and, although it earned him the criticism of The New York Times, and especially from editorialist Herbert Matthews who was bitterly anti-Peron, Ambassador Nufer felt, after some soul-searching and doubt, that the proper thing was to go and pay his respects. (After all, he said, Peron was human and his wife had died after long suffering).

And so, with Eva Peron lying in state for several days, while tens of thousands of Argentines, (especially the working class and mostly women) passed before her bier, Ambassador Nufer appeared, unannounced and unescorted, and stood quietly and respectfully for a while beside the coffin, much to the surprise of the mourners and especially of Peron whom he had not yet met. (The Ambassador, just arrived, had not yet presented credentials and was therefore without official standing).

That gesture, however, was, I believe, very important in establishing a basis for the kind of personal relationship which Nufer was able to develop with Peron and was a factor

in the improvement for a time in U.S.-Argentine relations which later occurred.. Peron, apparently, rightly viewed the Ambassador's act simply as one of human consideration, which it was, and responded to it in kind.

A few months after my arrival in Argentina General Eisenhower was inaugurated as President and gave some priority to his desire to strengthen Latin American relationships. So in early 1953, shortly after his inauguration, he sent his brother, Milton Eisenhower, on a very highly publicized visit of fact-finding and goodwill to key Latin American countries.

The Embassy had considerable difficulty against strong opposition in the Department and even from some nearby posts, in having Argentina included in his South American itinerary. Although Peron was an elected President, there was much bitter feeling against Argentina which was seen as a dictator-led, hold-over Fascist country which deserved to be snubbed by the President's brother.

Just after we had fought a long and costly war to rid the world of Fascism, Peron (and Argentina itself with which country we had never had warm relations) was especially unpopular. Also, Argentina's ambiguous role and attitude during the war and Peron's newly developing, pretentious “Third Position” in the growing post-war struggle between the West and Soviet-Communism was more than adequate basis disapproval and resentment.

In short, Peron and Peronismo; his Mussolini-like but always eloquent balcony addresses to his manipulated union followers mandatorily packed into the Plaza de Mayo; their shouted “democratic” endorsement of his proposals (often rewarded on the spot with a paid holiday-cynically called SAN PERON); and, Evita's showy exploitation of her “adoring” masses, coupled with her scornful vindictiveness toward all others, made it all hard to swallow as all the things we were opposed to seemed to be reflected in Peron's character, in Peronismo and in the kind of government he was running. Such antics were by their very nature most distasteful to most Americans.

Also, Peron had the intractable opposition of the American media. If simple antipathy on grounds just mentioned were not enough, Peron had also nationalized one of the great newspapers of the world, La Prensa of Buenos Aires. and turned it into a controlled caricature of its former status in the world of journalism. That act, in addition cost the Associated Press one of its biggest accounts. Thus, while the media had plenty of reason to oppose Peron for his affront to democracy and press freedom, the accompanying financial damage to the Associated Press may have added something to the solidarity of all the American media and their unrelenting and determined opposition to Peron.

As a footnote I might add that while Peron had indeed been elected by an overwhelming majority—something like 75% or more of the votes—it had certainly not by our lights been a fair campaign. The opposition was hamstrung at every turn, had no free press support as there was none such, had limited access to radio, etc., etc. Nonetheless it was generally considered by most observers that he would have received at least majority support of Argentines even in a fair election and there was opposition representation in the Legislature, powerless as it was.

The leading opposition figure was Arturo Frondizi of the Union Civica Radical (Radical Civic Union) who finally became President for a time in the post-Pron period. Finally, a factor in Peron's attitude toward the U.S. was that a former American Ambassador, Spruille Braden, had virtually campaigned against him. Many Argentines thought that in a campaign where a patriotism-inspiring slogan—Braden O Peron—was gleefully exploited by the Peronistas, Peron's margin of victory would not have been so large had Braden behaved more correctly.)

While recognizing the many good reasons for Milton Eisenhower to skip Argentina and thus deliver a clear and in many ways satisfying message, it was hard to see what in fact this snub delivered to one of the three most important South American countries Brazil, Argentina, Chile) would accomplish or how it could serve US interests, especially since he would be going to the other two. Looking beyond such immediate though questionable

satisfaction which Peron's humiliation might bring, Ambassador Nufer and most (but not all) of his policy-advising staff believed it more important to try to influence Peron toward our side in the developing cold war and felt that with Evita gone there was a chance for a change to our advantage. The thought that Peron absent Evita might be different was an important consideration.

Supporting this estimate was the fact that by that time Ambassador Nufer, helped by his genial personality and vernacular command of Spanish—including an inexhaustible supply of jokes in that language, which Peron enjoyed— and by Peron's clear appreciation for the gesture which Nufer had made at Evita's bier, had established a comfortable relationship with Peron in their several official contacts at the Casa Rosada. In these contacts the Ambassador had sensed that Peron would respond to a gesture pointing toward a possible improvement in relationships. On the other hand, a humiliating snub (by the Eisenhowers, President and brother) would surely end that possibility.

In the end the Embassy's view prevailed and the President's distinguished educator brother did come to carry out a very effective program of formal and informal (football game at a jam-packed stadium) contacts with Peron which the Embassy and the Foreign Office had organized.

Through it all, the ambience was correct but not warm, but as the program developed neither was it cold. With Nufer as a skilled interpreter at their sides, the two got along well and established a kind of wary rapport which with some follow-up contact and correspondence, provided the basis for Ambassador Nufer to work toward a considerable change in the way things were going between the United States and Argentina.

In short, Milton Eisenhower agreed with the Embassy that with Evita gone and Peron showing signs of desire for change, the United states should try to develop some influence for better relations and, perhaps, for a better condition for the Argentines. It seemed worth a try with potentially significant benefits against little to loses by failure.

Coincidentally, in the aftermath of Evita's death, changes were occurring, slowly, in Argentina as well. Although middle and upper class Argentines opposed Peron, increasingly some began to regard him (even if grudgingly) as somewhat the arch-typical, macho Argentine Army officer product of the middle class; and, the waning memory of Evita, whose embalmed remains were jealously guarded at Labor Headquarters, made this all the easier.(Elaborate efforts were reportedly made by Evita's Labor guardians to embalm and restore her remains-looking, it was said, to her eventual canonization; and, in a country where there was no free press the gossip and rumor mills were constantly fed with the most outlandish, shocking and often ghoulish “details”. But the truth was that no one knew anything.)

I guess I digressed there re Evita's remains. So to pick up the thought, Peron, after all, had many characteristics and qualities that many Argentines could recognize and identify with even if not support. That was not the case with regard to Evita, however insofar as the upper and middle classes resented, hated and even despised her. Evita's strength came from organized labor which owed her much as a practical matter, and vice versa. And in addition to the working class men, a form of adulation came to her from working women and from the lowest of the low, servant-class women, who saw in her rise, almost from their own humble status, a sort of fairy-tale hope for themselves and for their future. If Eva could rise so high couldn't anyone?

Evita was, as workers saw it, the spiritual embodiment of a deep-rooted revolution which for the first time in Argentine history sought to give them both social and political status and protection from the grievous exploitation to which many of them had customarily been subjected. (As for servant women, my wife and I learned early on in our Argentine experience that really heartless exploitation of such women was not uncommon even by people who could afford to house, feed and pay them well. Many were said to sleep in hallways even without a bed. But we also learned that Eva's rise largely had put an end to this-hence her status among to lowest—and her death did not end the adoration of her by

such people. And the government-backed power given to organized labor doubtless gave factory and other unionized workers a better share than they had been able win before.

In the months after Milton Eisenhower's visit Ambassador Nufer had a good atmosphere within which to advance the constructive dialogue he had initiated with Peron and coincidentally, things did begin to improve in the country as the economy gradually strengthened. And moral was palpably lifted with an end to the unprecedented requirement for black bread only and even strict meat rationing which were shockingly and stringently in effect—(in this bounteous land of meat and wheat)— when I arrived.

With these developments internal political tensions began gradually to subside as well. As for our own relationships, Ambassador Nufer's continued good reception from Peron, who clearly liked him, and a useful follow-up visit by Assistant Secretary of State Holland (also the kind of down to earth, vernacular-Spanish speaking diplomat who could best communicate with Peron) were followed by some concrete, positive developments such as the start-up of the Kaiser auto assembly plant in Cordoba -(the first in a now large industry there); a very well received, spectacular and popular visit by the Air Force Thunderbird Team,-(no one had seen such precision, jet flying before); and, early consideration of a possible Export-Import Bank loan for electric development all brought about a greater degree of normalcy if not cordiality in official US-Argentine contacts.

The overall impact was such that by mid 1954, if my memory serves correctly, our relationships were constructive and probably at least as good as they had ever been. (Pre-Peron they had never been warm as Argentina, almost as a thorn in our sides constantly challenged US influence in Latin America and competed with Brazil and Chile for South American leadership).

At this point I should insert one concrete evidence of a dividend emanating from our better relations which surely would not otherwise have occurred. I'm sure enough time has passed to speak of this then-classified event, which started when Peron called

Ambassador Nufer in to protest that his agents had discovered ours trying to bug the Soviet Embassy. He said that our “clumsy effort” (his description) had almost blown their own taps. He proceeded top offer, then and there, to share the product with us if we would only not try again.

At a time of increasing cold-war tensions and McCarthy era hysteria this gesture, giving us an information pipeline into the Soviet Embassy, was as appreciated as it was surprising. No time was wasted in augmenting our station by a number of Russian-qualified translators and analysts to deal with the product which I assume was of some value to us. I believe we shared back to the Argentines what we developed from the raw data and believe the activity went on at least until Peron's downfall. I also assume the information was useful. .

To return to the narrative, there was also greater acceptance internally of Peron than there had been theretofore by industrial and commercial interests, by elements of the middle class and even by some in the oligarchy.— Here is an interesting evidence of this change:

I think it was in October of 1954 when the exclusively upper class yachting community, which was very large in Argentina and which had been prevented for many years because of tension between the two countries from doing what they loved to do—sail across the Rio de la Plata for weekends in Uruguay—had come to the point where they were willing to pay homage to the President with the tacit understanding that this ban would thereafter be lifted. Although it had been hotly debated in the clubs and some did not participate, on a certain Sunday at about mid-October nearly 2,000 yachts of all sizes passed in review by the presidential yacht, which was anchored at the Olivos Yacht Club. Peron, standing at the stern beside the flag, took this salute with obvious satisfaction.

(I know because my wife and I, in order to be able to observe, experience the ambience of and later report on this most striking political event, sailed our own, venerable Six Meter Class boat in harrowing proximity to all the others. It was a sort of demanding

“achievement” test for us as newly minted sailors, determined to do it all under sail, alone and without power.)

At the time, it seemed, that with such an occurrence, embodying a degree of chary goodwill and perhaps tentative, at least, class reconciliation, better times might well be coming to Argentina and to Argentines. Alas, this was not to be and the era of “good” or perhaps just better feeling was tragically over in a matter of weeks.

As certain moderate and positive forces were moving Peron toward the high point which the yachting event represented, a mixed bag of contrary forces (extremists, fascists, ordinary rowdies—Guillermo Patricio Kelly's Alianza—and even communists) had been at work behind the scenes to push Peron in the opposite direction —and in the end they won. The common thread which united these disparate forces within Peron's always heterogeneous movement was their aim to continue social and class conflict and to thwart any rapprochement with the United states which a more moderate and possibly, eventually, less dictatorial Peron might achieve. A milder Peronist Argentina or even a somewhat more democratic one eventually would obviously not be to the liking of such interests. .

Thus, as Peron seemed to pay attention to some more constructive and moderate advisers, he was moving in one direction. And as these became more influential in the era of a somewhat softer Peron, the extremists were losing ground and seeking opportunity to stir up trouble and provoke a clash which would force Peron to return to more reliance on them.

One of the things that was going on behind the scenes with scant publicity was Peron's interest in young people,(ostensibly for the political objective of forming future staunch Peronists) but this activity inevitably gave rise to rumor, tentative and then increasingly persistent, of improprieties with young women of high school age. The locus of activity was

Peron's very large, official, suburban estate in Olivos which he had virtually turned into a club for secondary students.

He once explained in my presence that his reason for doing so many favors for people of this age group was that he had failed in all efforts to gain support of the university students who implacably opposed him. So, he said, his answer was simple: he would favor the high-school people, who would soon be in the university, and the problem would be solved in due course).

One can even suppose, perhaps, that what he started as a political objective put him in contact in his widowerhood with some delectable young things and a temptation which he did not have the character to resist. He quickly acquired a reputation for lechery as the country almost overnight began to buzz with rumors of the scandalous goings-on at Olivos. Later it became known that his favorite, one Nelly Rivas, I believe, was then about 15 years old, I seem to recall.

In a country where the Catholic Church was the official religion, where divorce was illegal, and where the women faithfully attended church, even if the men in general did not—except it was said for weddings, baptisms and funerals—this issue rapidly became the straw which broke the camel's back.

Responding in part to these scandalous rumors and perhaps to other general church-state problems as well, reflecting concern for the intrusion of Peronism in education of the children, (some of the Peronist-indoctrinating children's books which I saw could in no way have been welcomed by the Church as Peron and Evita were almost deified as role models instead of Mary, Jesus and the Saints) a bold and critical pastoral letter was read in all churches in late November, 1954.

The response was almost immediate—a bitter and emotional speech by Peron attacking the Church. Thus ended the era of good feeling, such as it was, and from then on until the bloody but unsuccessful Navy-inspired coup-attempt in June, 1945, and the final,

successful military revolt in August, 1955, leading to Peron's downfall and exile, everything went downhill on an ever more slippery slope.

Peron's harsh tirade against the first pastoral letter was responded to by more critical pastoral letters, helping to inspire women especially, and even, timidly, some elements of the press and opposition politicians, to express in varying degrees their disapproval and even defiance. And it is to be supposed that in the bedrooms of military officers, wives became unrelenting in pressuring their reluctant husbands to pull up their moral socks and do something.

The development of events are, of course, fully documented in Embassy reports at the time and in those of the foreign press reporting on Argentina which by and large went out uncensored. These should be consulted for accuracy and detail. Here, speaking from memory and many years later, I am only trying to paint the broad picture without specifics.

There was a rapid deterioration as the Church”s critical debate with Peron inspired marches, clashes and the ever-increasing crescendo of rumors upon rumors. The rumor mill—absent a free press— was so prevalent that choosing what to believe became more an exercise of intellect and judgement—or even an art of sorts— than anything else; and the choice was constant and broad, from the impossibly outlandish to the seductively persuasive which might, even, be the truth.

I remember, for example, that our station chief was 100% taken in by what the political section of the Embassy disbelieved and irreverently dubbed “the tumor-rumor”. This held that Peron was suffering from an incurable brain tumor which affected his sanity and judgement and would lead to an early demise. His reports, a veritable stream of them, were always persuasively based on “highly qualified” medical sources who had supposedly examined Peron or on others claiming intimate and direct knowledge. Throughout society and the cocktail circuit all sorts of people “in the know” would fill us in on this and other gossip.

Eventually, the view of the political section on this issue came to be that you got what you paid for and if you wanted to believe something your sources were only too ready to oblige. For our part, we discounted the rumors on the basis of personal observation of Peron, mostly by the Ambassador but also by others (myself included), to whom Peron always appeared healthy, vigorous and rational. He did have a persistent “tic”, i.e. the blinking of one eye and we supposed that this must have been what gave rise to the “tumor rumor” seized upon so hopefully by the populace and others. As we now know, Peron lived for about another twenty years and I do not think it was a brain tumor which got him in the end.

Speaking of rumors, I used to tell the correspondent of The New York Times, an especially close friend and later Godfather to my children, that I could plant a story—a pure invention — with someone at lunch at the Plaza Hotel about 10 blocks up the Calle Florida from the Embassy, and that no matter how fast I walked back to my office I would find it there as a sure -fire fact by the time I arrived.

Once I tested it by confidentially relating at a cocktail party to a group of my press friends (Times, Time, AP and UPI) a fine cock-and-bull invention of my own about a supposed Naval uprising. Sensing that I had been only too convincing, I disavowed the story before any of them could run with it. However, so strong was the penchant to rely on rumor that I actually had some struggle in unconvincing them. And I always believed that even after my disavowal some of them at least checked further into my invention just to be sure that I had not made an inadvertent slip of real dope which I later tried to cover up.

But to get back to the story, the first significant event after the initial exchange between the Church and Peron happened in early December—I believe on or about December 6 — when a religious gathering was scheduled to be held in the Plaza de Mayo initiating, I believe, the Maryan Year. This was the perfect cover for political as well as religious

expression and the response was striking as the Plaza was filled with a huge, white handkerchief-waving crowd which rivaled those gathered for Peron's balcony scenes.

The happening was without incident but the message was clear: the people in the name of religion had been emboldened in effect to demonstrate against Peron by supporting the Church, now in open conflict with him. The trend was thus set with additional pulpit-read pastoral letters being followed by further Peronist criticism and, of course, by the rumor mill operating at full blast to create ever-increasing tension

The next critical event happened, I believe, in April or May of 1955, when an even larger Church-sponsored gathering met one Saturday I believe) afternoon in the Plaza de Mayo fronting on the Casa Rosada, the Executive Mansion. From there the silent crowd, all waving white handkerchiefs and many bearing Papal flags, proceeded up the broad, tree-lined Avenida de Mayo to gather and demonstrate, pointedly, in front of the Legislative Palace,

The march proceeded without incident but as the vanguard entered the plaza, a group of younger men bearing the Papal flag hauled down the blue and white Argentine colors from the Legislative flagpole and raised in its stead a large gold and white Papal flag.

This gave rise to a highly publicized and embittering incident in which, some time later, after most of the crowd had dispersed and been replaced by a claque of Peronist supporters, the Minister of the Interior, the sinister, much feared, little-known and mysterious Angel Borlenghi, appeared on the balcony, holding aloft the burned remains of an Argentine flag which he charged had been desecrated by the religious demonstrators. The violently aggrieved tone of the outcry against this act and its extensive publicity later given by the docile and directed press served, of course, further to exacerbate the situation. Thus emotions and events proceeded explosively toward their inevitable conclusion.

As a footnote to this event I should note that I was witness to it all since I, as the junior political officer, was present as an observer at all demonstrations, Peronist and otherwise. The better to inform my Embassy and my government firsthand. At Peronist events I camouflaged myself as best I could under a gaucho hat and Peronista lapel button while at religious events I came complete with white handkerchief.

On this occasion, as luck would have it, although part of a massive crowd, I was precisely among the small group of young men who performed the flag caper, as a matter of fact right under the flagpole. While it may well have been pre-planned (I had no way of knowing) and while I do not know what exactly happened to that flag, I do know that no flag was burned then and there or anywhere nearby insofar as I could see. I therefore supposed and so reported that, seizing upon the incident, the burned flag was presumably prepared in the Ministry and in due course displayed by Borlenghi for his intended purpose.

While there was some localized cheering when the flag exchange occurred, the act in itself had as rather quickly sobering effect. Thus, possibly fearful of reprisal then and there, the religious crowd having accomplished the objective of reaching the Legislative Plaza, began an orderly but rapid dispersal.

The next few weeks brought deterioration and increased tension at a rapid pace and there were even some outright clashes. I remember, for example, that my wife and I were invited to Sunday night supper at the City Hotel, just off the Plaza de Mayo, by the New York Times correspondent and his wife who had taken up temporary residence there. But the evening was flawed as a social event as our host never joined us except intermittently as he was busy observing a small but vociferous anti-government rally in the Plaza.

From time to time he would rush in, excitedly to tell us of the latest developments, the last time stinking of tear gas. It was really surreal as there we were, in the quiet elegance of a

Buenos Aires hotel, with soft dinner music and the best of food, while not 100 yards away a clash was in progress complete with police control by tear gas.

After the last smelly appearance of our host I thought it best to get my wife out of the area and back to the tranquility of our nearly suburban apartment, well beyond the zones of political activity. In those circumstances one did not relish being far removed from an infant daughter or to having a nice convertible exposed to mob damage. Retreat was in order.

The balloon finally went up in mid-June, June 18, I believe it was, when the first overt attack against Peron occurred. This was, I believe, a Friday afternoon and right about noon. The Ambassador who had called on Peron briefly that morning at the Casa Rosada mentioned on return that while Peron appeared normal he had sensed uneasiness in the demeanor and movement of others. There was too much abnormal activity, he thought. Nevertheless, there was nothing specific, and he had gone to the airport many miles out of town) to meet someone. Also, the Deputy Chief of Mission and the senior political officer had gone for official lunches in the suburbs.

With everything being quiet, I and a couple of other officers were on the way to lunch at a small Spanish-style restaurant in the Plaza de Mayo. We took the elevator down, the Chancery being on the eighth floor of the Boston Bank building on the corner of the famous Calle Florida and Diagonal Norte, a major artery leading into the Plaza de Mayo, one block away.

As I stepped out of the elevator on the ground floor I ran into an Argentine stringer for Time magazine whose offices were on the second floor and I asked him (the standard greeting in times of tension) “Hola, Carlitos, que hay de nuevo?” — “Hi, Carlos, what's new?” Carlos answered: “Absolutemente nada, todo tranquilo” — “Absolutely nothing, everything is calm.” And at that very instant, the first bomb hit right out in the Diagonal Norte in front of the Embassy; followed immediately by other explosions farther away!!!

Q: Who was the bomb directed at, at the embassy?

SIRACUSA: No. The bombs (eventually many of them in successive waves) — were intended for the Plaza de Mayo and specifically the Casa Rosada where, obviously, they were hoping to get Peron. (We later learned that Peron sensing or tipped off as to danger had long since departed for parts unknown).

I was startled by the noise and at first instant thought I'd heard a close bolt of lightning and thunder. But just as quickly, realizing that it was a bright and sunny day, the actuality dawned on me, shocking as it was. Afraid to reenter the elevator I turned and ran all the way up the eight flights to the Chancery.

Being the only and therefore senior officer on board at the moment—I was Second Secretary, or maybe First Secretary by that time, I can't remember— I rushed in to our telephone operator's room just in front of my office and asked her immediately to get Washington. I had looked out my window, and I could see the planes coming — they were small Navy biplanes — coming right down the Diagonal Norte, those at a somewhat higher altitude maybe 5-800 feet) to drop their bombs and veer away and the lower ones, just about at my rooftop level, to enter the Plaza de Mayo at the Cathedral corner then to strafe and zoom up over the Casa Rosada at the other end.

After the first wave had gone by, I knew exactly what was going on and from my vantage point could see people fleeing the Plaza where I would have been a few minutes later) .I could also see the smoke rising from whatever destruction the bombs had caused in the Plaza beyond my field of vision.

Miraculously, given the sad state of telephones in general in Buenos Aires at the time, our skillful operator got through to Washington almost immediately and had on the line the party I wanted, Henry Holland, Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs. And in this there is an anecdote which I think might be of small historical interest.

It so happened that Washington was that day practicing its first nuclear-age evacuation of key officers and Secretary Holland was in the Department's bunker which I believe was at that time somewhere near Front Royal, Virginia. My first task as it turned out was to convince Henry whom I had known from our previous service together in Mexico City) that my call was for real and not just one of the planned exercises for the day.

I think conviction finally came at last from Holland's perception of the anger and adrenaline-excitement in my voice, and perhaps from the sound of the next stick of bombs exploding outside. I was too keyed up to be afraid) In any case, when I had reported as much as I could I promised to try to call back in about an hour and then hung up. But that was not to be and we had no further direct communication of any kind for about three days, and neither did anyone else.

As I remember, the outside world after my one brief report got news of Argentine events, such as they were, from Uruguayan reports based on monitored Argentine radio talk. In those days our Embassies were not equipped with the sophisticated means of independent communication which they have today. .

(My success in getting through this one call mortified my press friends, not one of whom had been able to file a report before communications were cut off centrally. I still do not know how our operator had managed it so quickly. I suspect that in the sisterhood of operators she had friends in the central offices who did her favors when asked, and hurried that one call through before they pulled the plug.).

Turning my attention then to more immediate concerns, I told everybody to go down to the bank vaults for safety, except for the Marine guards, the telephone operator and myself. The marines quickly made a bunker of large, leather sofas under which they, the operator and I could dive as needed. This was in the lobby at their station and just a few steps from my office and that of the telephone operator.

To achieve some early warning of coming danger I could step out onto a wide ledge outside my office and look up the Diagonal Norte toward the Obelisk at the broad Avenue Nueve de Julio the widest in the world, the Portenos. Shortly after the bunker was up I saw a formation coming in somewhat higher than others had and I also saw them release their bombs, every one of which looked like it was coming right at me personally. All of us had just dived under the sofas when this stick hit, much too close for comfort. One bomb exploded in the Diagonal just outside our office, breaking most of the windows in the lower four or five floors and another went through the roof of the next building from ours, maybe about 50 to 70 yards beyond our position. The rest, apparently, landed on target in the Plaza de Mayo.

After about an hour and several bombing and strafing runs there was a lull in the action and we could observe a great number of curious Argentines walking into the Plaza to see what happened, only to be scattered and some doubtless killed by another wave of strafing planes.

Eventually, the Navy apparently having shot its wad and its “heroic” pilots—the New York Times' Herbert Mathews term, not my own— having landed for asylum in Montevideo, it was the Army's turn as tanks and some small artillery took up positions outside the Ministry of Defense and began to bang away. This was on the other side of the Casa Rosada, out of our sight but well within earshot.

During another lull about mid-afternoon the Ambassador managed to return to the office as did the DCM and other officers. We then sent most of the staff home as it seemed safe to exit the area up the Calle Florida (or anywhere away from the Plaza de Mayo). Strangely enough the Calle Florida bore intermittent pedestrian traffic most of the afternoon. Buenos Aires is such a large city that action such as we experienced was highly localized.

Later, since there was nothing much we could do, we all went home except for a Marine contingent and one duty officer. In the late afternoon when it was apparent that the

attempted coup, with no follow-up, had failed, one last gasp effort by perhaps the only remaining Navy plane made a run at the President's official residence at the edge of downtown Buenos Aires, hoping we supposed that Peron might be there and might be hit like the proverbial needle in a haystack. Tragically, however, they damaged nothing presidential but did hit some nearby apartments with a few fatalities and injuries to the totally innocent.

As another comment on communications I might note that while international phones were cut off, local service continued with little interruption.. Thus I was able to reassure my wife at home, tell her to stay put, and to speak to the Ambassador at his residence. While I told him I thought there was nothing he could do at the Chancery and that we were all safe, those who had not already gone home, he insisted on coming so I suggested a route whereby he could leave his car near the Calle Florida strictly a walking street) and safely approach the Chancery from close-by—which he did.

That tragic day was, as I recall, supposed to have been observed as some sort of a commemoration of significance to the Navy in which their planes were to have made a symbolic flyover of the city. They departed from their base in La Plata, then called Eva Peron, performed their altogether sinister instead of symbolic mission, and then flew on to Uruguay where planes and pilots were safely interned. Shockingly, it seemed to us, the New York Time' Herbert Mathews called them heroes. But to us and I suspect even to some Peron-hating Argentines as well it must have seemed a cowardly act to bomb the heart of their own city, at that moment teeming with innocent civilians, without warning of any kind, in hopes apparently of killing one man. And, although they missed him, they did manage to kill several hundred people boarding their busses and streetcars for home and lunch, just outside the Casa Rosada.

Seeing the burned out cars and bodies when I later ventured briefly into the Plaza was a horrible and tragic shock never to be forgotten. And when next I ventured into the Plaza a day later it was to see the terrible damage done inside the National Cathedral the night

before as the Alianza thugs led by Gilleremo Patricio Kelly attacked it and many other churches in a night of savage vengeance, using Molotov cocktails and other weapons to wreak their havoc. When over, it had been a bloody and terrible afternoon and night; and it was a totally indecisive Act I, which settled nothing.

Life magazine, in one of its memorable feats of photo journalism, recorded the shocking damage to the churches in unforgettable black and white pictures.

Ironic for me was the memory of an interview I had recently had with the young hot-head Kelly—today we might call him a skinhead—for some unremembered reason. Such as he, notorious for having lead the destruction of the Jockey Club in 1952 and for similar crimes and general acts of public intimidation, was not a customary visitor to the American Embassy; but he had asked and I received him.

In any case, this being after the beginning of the Church-State conflict. I queried him on his attitude toward that subject. To my great surprise he opened his shirt and showed me a crucifix hanging around his neck. He then said—which seemed then to imply much—that he had been raised and educated by priests to whom he owed his life. He then dropped the subject after this seeming dramatic and unexpected gesture. One wonders what must have been his thoughts as he and his gangs ravaged the churches.

During that memorable night the DCM, Gary Ackerson, and I and several other officers were at the Residence trying as best we could to get some line on the welfare of Americans. Most residents, we could assume, were safely at home so our concern centered on several dozen family members of the advance party of Kaiser Motor Co. who were then residing at the City Hotel, just off the Plaza de Mayo and about two blocks from the National Cathedral. The New York Times correspondent's wife and children were also there, we knew. As we began to receive reports of the attacks on the churches, including the Cathedral, and rumors also of another attack to be made on the Casa Rosada at dawn

the next day, we decided that we must try to evacuate these people, dangerous as it might be to go out on that dark night.

About two in the morning, having contacted one of the Kaiser party at the hotel, we set out in about 5 station wagons to rendezvous with them at the hotel. It was very dark and we had to cross several roadblocks before leaving our caravan at the intersection of the broad Nueve de Julio and the Avenida de Mayo, about 8 blocks from the hotel. Gary and I then proceeded down the darkened street being scarily challenged twice by nervous sentries. However, we never reached the hotel as, to our relief, we encountered the party, about two dozen women and children, walking up the Avenue. Afraid because of our delayed arrival, they had decided to risk the darkened streets rather than stay so close to what they feared might come with the dawn. About a half hour later, very relieved in all respects, we arrived without incident back at the Residence where the evacuees were given refreshment and as much comfort as possible. Happily there were no American casualties in these events although, tragically, this was not the case for many Argentines.

In a few days, with no free media to keep the subject alive, things settled down to a seeming but expectant normalcy. But of course that was not the case and even though Peron survived. Characteristically for Peron there was no general punishment, nor was it possible with most of the perpetrators safely in Uruguay, champagne-toasting their prowess, it was reported, at a downtown hotel. And, of course, there was none for Kelly and his thugs. But the wheels were obviously turning and the country waited with seeming bated breath for the next act, which was not long in coming.

In about mid-August fighting broke out again with an Army revolt in Cordoba, This led in but a few days to the toppling of Peron with little or no fighting when Buenos Aires based forces despatched to deal with the rebels declared en route for the other side.

Then followed the classic Latin American race for Embassy asylum by principal Peronistas, wrong-side military figures and others. Peron found safety in the Embassy

of Paraguay, and most of the others elsewhere. The Minister of Defense was turned away from our Ambassador's residence as we determined there was no “hot pursuit” endangering his life.

There followed an orgy of vengeance by citizens and elements of the Military, venting the pent up frustration of years of domination and seeking to destroy and obliterate every vestige of Peron, Peronismo, the Justicialist Party and the memory and works of Evita. I remember watching out the same window from which I had observed the Naval planes on their runs, the destruction of an office of the Eva Peron Foundation across the street. Furniture, files, pictures, statues—in short, everything moveable was tossed out of the windows and everything breakable or burnable was broken or burned or dismantled.

There was a very destructive Army attack on a labor stronghold just outside Buenos Aires, and one night tanks surrounded and literally destroyed the downtown headquarters of the Alianza hoping, presumably, to get Kelly inside. (He escaped that one but was later captured and imprisoned for a while at least. Years later, it was reported, he escaped to Chile disguised as a woman).

For several weeks Peron was kept aboard a leaky Paraguayan gunboat in Buenos Aires harbor and finally cleared to sail away for Asuncion. On the same day, as it happened, my wife I and our daughter sailed for New York on the SS Argentina, our memorable and eventful three-year assignment to Argentina having been completed.

I guess this personal reminiscence is really not what we want here. So to sum up, I considered that a great opportunity had been lost in Argentina. If Peron had been able to continue along the more moderate line he had for a while at least chosen after Evita's death, and not been derailed by his own character flaws and the pressure of extremist associates which projected into the conflict with the Church, the history of Argentina might have been much different.

Q: Well, that's interesting. No, I think that this anecdote is exactly what is called for. This is something that you wouldn't find elsewhere. However, right after Eva Peron died, you suggested that Juan Peron was embarked on a more moderate course. But there was a boycott in 1953 of he legislative elections by the radical party, which was followed by violence against the radical party and also followed by some additional curtailment of the services of the Associated Press and UPI and so forth, which suggests that the opposition to Peron was coming not only from the more radical elements within his own movement but from the opposition parties. Could you comment on that?

SIRACUSA: Well, the principal opposition party, the UCR, led by Arturo Frondizi, could not have been happy with the nascent rapprochement with the US or even with a more moderate stance by Peron. Both would tend to limit their stature and hope for somehow achieving power and the prospects for such achievement by democratic means had to appear slim indeed.

Their best hope, it would seem, would be by some form of military ouster not only of Peron but of the apparatus of Peronismo, followed hopefully by elections which could give them a fair chance for power.

Since relative tranquility and economic progress are not the stuff of which coups are inspired or made it would, it seems, behoove the opposition to play dog-in-the-manger and to keep up pressure against Peron whenever and wherever they could and not participate in elections in which they could neither win nor advance their power significantly. (And in our contacts with them they made clear their critical view of our efforts to deal with Peron)

For his part, a macho Peron would have to show his power over an opposition not being properly submissive and docile, hence the political tensions and even some violence to which you referred in 1953.

Also, as the improvements already noted began to be apparent, including the greater willingness, absent Evita, of at least much of middle and upper society including merchants, industrialists, bankers and even estancieros whose wives had been deliberately insulted and humiliated by Evita), to at least reconcile themselves to Peron, the political opposition could not have been very happy.

So of course your question is a good one. The pressures projecting Peron ultimately over the cliff were coming not only from the extremist elements of Peronismo but also from all elements of the political opposition, technical allies, so to speak, with a common immediate interest but different ultimate objectives. And, of course they were right, for it was only after the ouster of Peron and the stringent suppression and political outlawing of Peronismo that the UCR and Frondizi finally came to power, if only for a relatively short time.

Q: Would you suggest then that the conflict with the Church further alienated this particular group?

SIRACUSA: As for the political opposition, I certainly do not think they approved or fomented the clash, although they must have seen it as a promising way to oust Peron and rubbed their hands accordingly. The other non-government groups mentioned had to be alienated by Peron's acts which perpetrated the crisis, egged on by their offended and religious wives if not by their own principles; and likewise for the military officer class and for the same reasons.

After all, there was a certain code in a country without divorce where mistresses were common for those who could afford them, and where even seemingly faithful and loyal wives could clandestinely meet their lovers at the so-called “amuebladas” (furnished sites with discreet off-street parking and no questions asked} for dalliance in the afternoon. But fooling around with children was another thing. Even though it tolerated the described adult peccadillos, (which system in its way may have helped keep families together).

Argentina was a country with strong family values and ties and Peron's acts were thought justly outrageous.

The ones who clearly favored the conflict and helped to perpetrate it were, I believe, those in the Peronist movement who could hope so to regain their importance to and influence with Peron and thus oust the moderates who had for a while been in ascendancy. But, of course, their victory was but short-lived as the conflict they produced led to the downfall which in the end destroyed them all.

Q: Did this break with the Church anyway influence America's attitude towards Peron?

SIRACUSA: We could only watch it with sorrow and regret for the disaster we saw it wreaking over what we had hoped to achieve and may even have felt was within our grasp. Beyond this there was not much we could do about it. We observed it going on and we just sort of stood back. The Ambassador maintained some contact with Peron and tried to the extent he could to advise him to keep to the better course., But as indicated, the situation rapidly went to a level of emotion and conflicting determinations far beyond any ability we might have had to be of good influence.

On the anecdotal side, I observed a remarkable occurrence many years later when I was ambassador in Uruguay. Just after I arrived there, Peron, having returned to Argentina, been restored to his full military rank of General, been unexcommunicated by the Church (if there is such a word) and restored to the Presidency was paying a State visit to President Juan Bordaberry, a very decent military-dominated civilian at that time. This seemed to me to be a really extraordinary occurrence given the state of relationships with Uruguay during the heyday of Peronismo when I was there.

In those days you had a dictatorial bastion of fascism on one side of the river—a dominating, huge by comparison, and overbearing presence from the Uruguayan point of

view. And on the other side, little democratic Uruguay, scorning and figuratively thumbing its nose at Peron and all the time and in many ways being a constant thorn in his side.

For example, all of the radio stations there, which were clearly heard in Argentina, broadcast all the news unfit to print in media controlled Argentina, opposition attacks on Peron and all the rest. It was also a convenient haven for all who felt it best to run for political or other reasons. Being something of a financial center, it served as a handy black-market, thwarting the strictly controlled and artificial Argentine exchange rate. When the official rate in Argentina was 14 to the dollar the rate in Uruguay was never less than 22 to 1 in my years there and moved up through the numbers to ultimately go as high as 50 to one before I left. All the Embassies in Buenos Aires operated on the Uruguayan rate, with full knowledge of the Argentine Government, making regular courier runs for exchange. And, of course, the “heroic” Navy pilots who kicked off the revolt against Peron had taken asylum in Uruguay as well.

With this background one can readily imagine my amazement to see Peron and Bordaberry embrace on the balcony of government palace before the monument to Artigas, Uruguay's national hero, and with the faithful crowd chanting: “Bordaberry y Peron-un solo corazon” (Bordaberry and Peron-a single heart).

I could scarcely believe my ears. As I had not yet presented credentials I was not included in any official events and did not meet Peron. But from the crowd I could observe he was not the man I once knew and, indeed, he did not live much longer.

I also conjured up memories that day of my wife and I sailing down to Argentina. We had had a delightful cruise on one of the Moore-McCormick ships, I think it was the SS Uruguay, and after a day in Montevideo sailed for the overnight trip to Buenos Aires, across the River Plate. We felt then, given the state of relations with Argentina which we expected to find, that we were almost sailing behind a sort of iron curtain. The unsmiling

attitude and overbearing demeanor of the Argentine customs and immigration inspectors who came aboard did little to dispel our thoughts and apprehensions.

Happily for us, the warm dockside welcome we received from Ambassador Nufer eased our entry into the somewhat sullen atmosphere that pervaded Buenos Aires at the time. Argentines did not like black bread and meat rationing, and it showed.

Shortly thereafter I was plunged into the reality of political reporting in Buenos Aires, experiencing my first massive rally of the Peronista supporters, complete with Peron and his cohorts, coats off, as he addressed the banner-waving multitude of descamisados “shirtless ones”. My first impression apart from surrounding pressure of thousands of bodies and the spectacle of Peron and his comrades on the balcony, was the oddity of Peron, in order to identify more closely with his “shirtless ones”, appearing before them in shirt-sleeves. It seemed somehow inconsistent—coatless but with shirt did not a shirtless one make I thought.

As I took all this in, little did I suspect the special show arranged for the day. About midway through Peron's speech in which with great eloquence and passion he was giving hell to the enemies of the regime (those really responsible for black bread and meat rationing) the first “bomb” went off on the roof of a building adjoining the Plaza de Mayo and the crowd began to surge away from that point. Fortunately panic was arrested as Peron stood his ground and called for calm. Then came the second “bomb” which seemed to kick up a little dust on the rooftop but little else. I quickly decided that they were really more noisemakers than real bombs or else Peron and his friends surely would have fled. Nonetheless. not wanting to tempt fate or be smashed in a possible stampede, I eased to the back and returned to the Embassy, there to work on my firsthand report and hear the rest of the speech by radio.

None of us suspected, however, what was to be the aftermath of Peron's attack on the “enemies” of the State and supposed perpetrators of the “bombing” of his speech. That

night, the nefarious Alianza under Guillermo Patricio Kelly sacked and burned the elegant Jockey Club on the Calle Florida, destroying everything in this highest symbol of the privileged class, including priceless art and statuary.

The next morning, as I and my immediate boss, Robert Martindale, walked down the Calle to the Embassy, the silence in that block was literally deafening as everyone advanced with eyes forward, possibly only, as we did, stealing a sidelong glance at the wanton destruction.

Q: What did you think of Peron?

SIRACUSA: Peron was without doubt in my opinion a remarkable man in any setting and surely one of the most magnetic personalities I have ever met. In addition to my frequent view of him in political, public settings, I had occasion to see him from time to time up close, escorting visitors to meet him. Among Argentines he had his many followers and his many enemies. He was soundly disliked (and even detested not too strong a word) by some Americans— senators, congressmen, journalists businessmen and the like. Yet he was viewed as a celebrity and all wanted to see him. Those with adequate status almost demanded it. (Senator Capehart, for example, then chairman, I believe of the Senate Banking Committee.) Peron, in turn, was very generous in acceding to such requests made by Ambassador Nufer and it was interesting to observe the reaction of the visitors.

Peron was always relaxed, friendly and gracious. I never saw anyone, skeptical as they may have been going in, who was not affected to some degree by his chemistry and who did not come out sort of shaking their heads. They had certainly not been converted by him but they had to recognize he had special qualities, a commanding presence and easy charm which said much about his status and rise in his own country and which tended to mask the dictator and conjurer of exotic political doctrine he called Justcialismo.

Another thing I can say is that Peron and Evita did carry out a really profound social revolution in Argentina, perhaps, even, averting a worse one. And they did this for the

most part without widespread oppression, violence and bloodshed that has happened in other such historical events.

There were, of course, incidents of political and human rights being violated. But it was not as wide spread as it was reported to be. The reason for this, I believe, was that Peron did not have a bloodthirsty nature and his mass support was such that mass repression was not required.

The disaffected ones were the upper classes, and yet they were neither liquidated nor dispossessed and most survived with their material holdings largely intact. Looking back on my years there I felt that the great tragedy was that the trends in motion after the Milton Eisenhower visit could not have continued. Certainly there appeared to be some hope then of reconciling the revolution in a more constructive way.

But when it was all over, the people new in power did everything they could to eradicate and destroy the memory of Peron and Evita. The Party was outlawed and barred from all political action. Yet even with Evita dead and Peron in exile for years and years, what they left could not be so suppressed. In the end it failed and Peron returned at last in real if belated triumph.

Before I left I could observe the seeds of this eventuality. While the “wrecking crews” were out after Peron's fall it was eloquently clear that the “people” were not among them;. by that I mean the great mass of laborers, housemaids and the like. My wife and I observed also that the maids in our house were not celebrating—instead they were crying and could not be consoled, feeling abandoned and without hope again. It seemed to us to portend the future, long term. So I was not surprised when Peron did at last return-not restored to power if not vindicated.

I remember one of the last things I reported before I left was that the revolution was finished, but that the Peronist Revolution was not over. And this proved eventually to be the case as Peron returned as President, restored in military rank and in religion as well.

He was a sick and broken man by then and when he died was succeeded by his second wife, Isabellita.

What irony—Peron at the height of his power could not make Evita, (a real political power in her own right), Vice President, though he tried; yet in his waning days he could do that for Isabellita who then was elevated, disastrously, to the Presidency. Isabellita's only qualification was the name PERON, apparently still magic enough.

And last week in Argentina a Peronist candidate was elected overwhelmingly. I had a visit last week from a very close Argentine friend, a very wealthy man, a very smart man, and I have never seen him so pessimistic about his country, because of the election of Menem. He faces the initial challenge of horrendous inflation but that is nothing new. I would speculate, however, that this new Justicialist-Peronist president will bear scarce resemblance to the manner, trappings and excesses of the old Peronismo. He is of another generation and such things are really out of style; but we shall see.

Speaking of excesses. A favored slogan of the old days was “Peron Cumple-Evita Dignifica” (Peron Delivers-Evita Dignifies). One saw it plastered over the entire country in formal signs or graffiti. So I was not really surprised when on a memorable fishing trip to Tierra del Fuego I saw at the very end of the road, as far south as you could get—next stop Antarctica, virtually—a huge billboard proclaiming PERON CUMPLE-EVITA DIGNIFICA.

As another commentary on Peron I can relate that he appeared to have no fear of those he deemed to be his people. He had a Lambretta motor scooter, for example, which he liked to ride around Buenos Aires at night. He would go into the huge crowds at football games.with guards to be sure, but not too much of a show of them at that. One night the Ambassador and I saw him enter a relatively small and much overcrowded boxing arena at Luna Park. The crowd pressure was so great that he became separated from his guards

while going to ringside and anyone with a knife could easily have stabbed him, but Peron seemed unconcerned as he walked in waving to the crowd.

I also do not recall ever having heard of any attempt having been made on Peron's life, except, of course, that made in their way by the Navy pilots. He had a lot of magnetism. People either loved him or hated him. That is the way it was with not much in between, or so it seemed. If the Church-conflict tragedy had not occurred Argentine history could have been a lot different from what we have seen unfold in the last twenty-five years or so. But, as I have said, Peron brought it on himself.

Q: Let's move over to Rome in the early 60's. You were given a NATO assignment. Could you tell us something about that, what was the thrust.

SIRACUSA: I went to Rome by choice. I had been specializing in Latin American affairs, last as Director of the Office of Brazilian Affairs, and then attended the second class of the Senior Seminar, which has become quite an institution in the Department's higher education program.

Toward the end of the course new assignments were being talked of, and the logical thing was for me to go back to Latin America and in fact a senior position in Brazil was offered. However, I felt it was time in my career to make a break from Latin America at least for a while, and as a suitable position was available, I asked to go to Italy.

This served a personal wish as well as a professional objective. The personal reason was that my father and mother had come to the United States as immigrants from Italy, my mother at age 6 in company of her father and brothers and my father, aged twelve, in company only of his friend, aged thirteen, and knowing nobody over here. Ultimately, after what is truly a saga of self-help and achievement, he had become successful in the oil-well tool business. While I had accompanied him on his first return to Italy some years before,

which aroused by interest in the Foreign Service as a career, I had a special desire to be in Italy so I could welcome my parents there as a senior officer of the American Embassy.

That is why I went to Rome. The position which I was offered and accepted was called Advisor on Mutual Defense Affairs which meant the NATO office. I did a lot of traveling around, meeting with the different commands, The Southern European Task Force (SETAF) in the north, the Sixth Fleet and NATO commands in Naples, the Navy Command at Livorno, etc. We had a lot of bases around, Italy, Nike stations and the like and I did a lot of work to try to stabilize Status of Forces problems with the new situation of an Italy which, while a strong and willing ally, was no longer willing to give the conqueror everything it wanted without question. The problems were frictional, rather than deeply serious, and the real need was to induce our forces to show a greater sensitivity to Italian desires. And with a strong communist party ready to snipe at everything from the sidelines, it was necessary to amend our ways to some extent. There was never any question however that Italy wanted and welcomed our presence and this went for the people in general as well, most of whom had at least one relative in the United States.

Apart from the above, we did have one really sensitive problem and attention to it was my main task. No too long before my arrival we had completed the installation of a Jupiter missile base at Gioia del Colli in southern Italy, which had been established with as much secrecy as possible. These missiles were intended to be armed with atomic warheads but the base was completed and the missiles installed and manned before the necessary Atomic Stockpile Agreement had been reached with Italy.

Negotiations had been initiated but were stalled as the Italians, sensitive to the matter at best, wanted to use this opportunity as leverage to settle some of the frictional problems mentioned above before signing the stockpile agreement.

Upon my arrival, the Deputy Chief of Mission, Outerbridge Horsey, briefed me that my main task was to pick up this stalled negotiation the stockpile agreement. But there was a

peculiarity there, top secret at the time. That was that the warheads were already in place, sans agreement. That resulted from an unrecorded oral exchange between a very Senior US Air Force officer and a corresponding Italian. While established policy was neither to confirm nor deny anything to do with nuclear weapons the actual state of affairs was not public but both sides were anxious to legitimize the matter.

The ambassador, first James Zellerbach, and then was G. Frederick Reinhardt, a career officer, told me to give this the highest possible priority and I did so with my counterpart in the Foreign Office, Paulo Panza. Once I understood what the Italian hangup was and put some pressure on our own military to adapt more to new Italian sensitivities were able to make progress. Finally, a months before I left Italy we were able to sign the agreement and both sides breathed a sigh of relief. Ambassador Reinhardt told me that getting this agreement was the most important accomplishment of the Embassy in a long time.

Ironically, important as it might have been, at least to spare both sides much embarrassment if the actual situation had become known, that particular missile base did not last much longer and was eliminated in the general settlement after the Cuban Missile crisis the next year, along with a similar base in Turkey. But I assume the stockpile agreement still served for whatever weaponry of that nature remained as a factor in Italy in later years.

Q: That leads into the next question. In 1963 at the time of the Cuban missile crisis you were the USUN advisor on Latin American affairs. Could you share with us some of your insights from that vantage point as the confrontation with the Soviet Union over Cuba unfolded?

SIRACUSA: I met Governor Stevenson in Italy, in May or June of 1962 when this job came open in the United Nations and somebody recommended me for it. I really did not want to leave Italy which we enjoyed so much, but Stevenson on a visit to Italy talked to me about it and I agreed to accept the assignment.

So we left Italy in July of 1962, having been there exactly two years, and went New York. I reported for duty at USUN as Advisor on Latin American Affairs in late August. The General Assembly was about to start and there was much tension over Cuba stemming from accusations that the US was planning an invasion. It was in October, I believe, when the Cuban missile crisis erupted. My first knowledge of it came on a Saturday afternoon. Governor Stevenson returned to New York and told a hastily called meeting of senior advisors (Richard Pedersen was the senior political man) about the discovery of the secret missile base in Cuba and of the President's plans. As Latin American advisor I was included.

We learned that upon being informed, President Kennedy had abruptly returned to Washington from a political trip, pleading a cold as cover and had determined on his course of action. Our job was to prepare for Security Council action at the UN immediately after the President revealed the situation to the world in a speech to be given at 6 PM Monday evening. In that speech he was to announce a blockade and demand immediate withdrawal of all offensive weapons.

We spent the entire weekend, everyone, working in the utmost secrecy to prepare for this event and at the appointed hour on Monday we gathered in the Governor's office to hear the President's dramatic speech with its ominous revelation. I had in my pocket a letter from Governor Stevenson to the Secretary General calling for an emergency meeting of the Security Council. As soon as the President finished I raced across the street and up to the 38th floor of the UN building to deliver to the Secretary General's office our demand for an emergency Security Council meeting, the idea being to do this before the Soviets could. There followed a series of dramatic, televised encounters, as you may remember. Tuesday afternoon was the first, followed by others of Wednesday and I believe on Thursday. As I saw it, the UN's role was to serve as a pressure-release valve where the contending parties could blow off steam while real negotiations to solve the crisis proceeded secretly between the White House and the Kremlin with some intermediaries.

These produced a series of dramatic communications between Kennedy and Khrushchev of which we received copies and, as the exchange developed it and led by Saturday morning to the defusing agreement by which the Soviets agreed to withdraw all offensive weapons (bombers as well as missiles). In return for Kennedy's assurance not to invade Cuba.

In my opinion these few days marked the high point of UN achievement and an unforgettable experience for me, being, as I was, always in the Security Council with Governor Stevenson as he so ably debated and even humiliated the Soviet Ambassador, Zorin. Especially when he badgered Zorin into denying the missiles, only to call a recess whereupon we brought in huge aerial photographs which were clear for all to see. We could not have had a more able representative for this than Adlai Stevenson and his performance was superb. It was also a heady experience for me as I was privileged to be at his side. And especially so during respites while translations were in progress and he consulted the President who was of course watching on TV at the White House.

Through it all, Stevenson invariable kept his calm and his ready sense of humor which helped to ease tensions where many in the UN feared that a nuclear holocaust might be upon us. For myself, I never shared this fear possibly because I was so busy but also because, intellectually, I could not believe that the Soviet Union could possibly risk all it had achieved since their revolution to gain some obscure advantage in Cuba. It seemed to me that Khrushchev had tried a great bluff on our young President but that he would have to back down, as he did, when faced with a convincingly determined response.

And then there was a long period of negotiation after that was all over until December when I was able to go on my delayed home leave. A special Soviet Ambassador, I believe it was Kutsnev, came to carry out the negotiations at the UN. A minority point which sticks in my memory is that when he first called on Governor Stevenson I went down to greet him at the door of the USUN, a customary courtesy. Then we went up to Stevenson's antechamber, and he looked around and said, “This is a nice building, how much it

cost?". It was a remarkable question to ask, I thought to which I made some equally inane response that I guessed it had been quite a lot.

Throughout, the whole episode at the UN had been very dramatic and tense and a lot of people were scared to death. Some of the delegates, I know, sent their families away, fearing , it seemed, that New York could become a nuclear target.

For my own part, it never occurred to me to be frightened at all. My wife and family, my two little daughters, were living right there with me in New York but I judged that that the issue involved could not possibly lead to a nuclear exchange. The Soviet, I thought, had nothing to gain in Cuba remotely commensurate to what they could lose: the achievements of nearly 50 years of revolutionary government. To put that on the line over Cuba seem totally unrealistic. Barring irrational acts on one side or another, and I did not have time to dwell on that ominous thought, I could envision no outcome but some form of accommodation on their part. So at least I was able to play my small role without fear.

It seemed to me, moreover, that President Kennedy was on exactly the right course, standing up to them, putting up the blockade, and thus forcing them to back down as they finally did. In the exchange of letters which we saw all the time, Khrushchev was shifting his position back and forth, all of which is documented, sometimes being threatening and tough, and at other times vague or conciliatory.

It was certainly a very dramatic thing to participate in and also to observe some of the byplay that went on. A great deal of resentment seemed to develop in Washington at that time among many of the people surrounding the President. By his televised role in the UN debates, Governor Stevenson was inevitably projected into a dramatic prominence not seen since his failed runs for the White House against Eisenhower, and there was an extraordinary increase in phone calls and "fan" mail as thousands of letters poured in to USUN in praise of his action.

Could it be that some around the President resented this and maybe considered it somehow to threaten the President' justified praise for courage and leadership? Did they fear that the publicity attendant on the UN TV drama would tend to credit Stevenson too much for his role (after all, the really crucial negotiations leading to solution had been in Washington) and thus arouse jealousy? Who knows; but I doubt the President himself wasted much time on such sensitivities which are generally the province of acolytes.

Having only a peripheral view of this I cannot know. However, I do know believe that Stevenson, sensitive as he was, felt personally wounded by some of innuendo and worse. This was when the “hawk and dove” terms came out, and Stevenson was supposed to have been a dove, and the hawks were the ones who won, standing “eyeball to eyeball” with the Soviets until the latter “blinked”. Such dramatic press-agentry rhetoric aside, there is no taking away from Kennedy what he did, compensating perhaps for his less than stellar role in the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

As for me, I thought Stevenson was magnificent in the way he carried out his role in the United Nations, being exactly the right man for the job at that moment. The dramatic moment, for example, when he told Soviet Ambassador Zorin that he would wait until hell froze over to hear his answer. He knew that Zorin understood English, but was stalling to collect his thoughts during the translation. Then, after having badgered a confused Zorin into denying the missiles, he dramatically called for a pause in which we came in with the hugely blown up aerial photos, clear proof for all to see. It was a tense and memorable moment, the certain high point for worthwhile UN action up until then and, I believe, for years after.

I thought that Stevenson achieved the role that he was cut out for. You cannot imagine the stature that man had. Stevenson could say anything and people would seem to listen in awe. The world had seen his eloquence and grace in two failed runs for the Presidency, and he was much admired for his qualities as a genuine human being. So when he spoke, people listened because he was Adlai Stevenson. It was a great place for him to be and

a great privilege to work with him.Also, as a matter of fact, I came to believe that he was better in that role than he might have been had he been elected President. It seemed to me that he lacked some of the toughness that it took to be a politician; and, in fact, that he had too much integrity to be one.

Perhaps a little vignette of our brief association with him may be in order here. Since he had inquired about me, I was assigned as his “control officer” when he was passing through Rome in about May of 1962. Knowing that I might go to USUN I took my family to the airport to meet him and to invite him to rest in our villa before going on to Florence for a visit with his sister who lived there. But the governor, tired from the long overnight flight, and having to meet a later flight from London for another guest at his sister's house, asked instead if in the interim we could not have a quick lunch at Fregene, a nearby beach resort, where he might, as he said, see one of the then novel “bikinis.” So after lunch, and at least one Bikini sighting, we returned to the VIP lounge which I had engaged where he proceeded to nap;.

A few minutes later I heard a deep laughter from his end of the room and he proceeded to read from a piece of paper on which my 9-year-old daughter was writing a note to her best friend at home which said, as I remember: “Dear Eileen, I am here at the airport with some guy named Stveniss, or something, who wanted to be president but got beat. But he is nice, etc...”

Not only was he graciously amused with the foregoing, but he then turned to our18-year-old son and asked if he would like to go with him to Florence for the weekend, acting as his interpreter. He was also to attend the fabled and spectacular medieval horse race, the Palio, at Siena. Ernest Jr. (Jerry) accepted with alacrity and sans toothbrush or change, rushed off with the governor to meet his guest, Marietta Tree, and then off to the private jet of the head of Fiat for the flight to Livorno and then drive to Florence. What more memorable weekend could there have been for our son which included also, as weekend

guests, such as the celebrated chancellor of the University of Chicago, Robert Hutchins, and others. Such was our introduction to Adlai Stevenson. a man to remember.

Q: Let's move on to your position as deputy chief of mission in Peru. You were present when a military coup ousted Belaunde Terry, what were the factors that led up to his being overthrown and was the United States in any way implicated?

SIRACUSA: The answer to the last, were we implicated, is clearly no. On the other hand the factors that led up to his being ousted were a whole five and a half year history of his regime in which we were clearly involved in the focal issue facing the country which ultimately led to the military throwing him out. So that becomes a complex story. Maybe I had better start at the beginning.

I was at the USUN and I went on home leave at Christmas time after the missile crisis was resolved. When I returned to New York at the end of January, Governor Stevenson told me that Ambassador John Wesley Jones, a career officer just assigned to Peru, (last post Ambassador to Libya) had come to New York to meet me, and invite me to go to Lima as his Deputy Chief of Mission. (The Ambassador had no previous Latin American service and, I understand, Ralph Dungan following LA affairs in the White House had suggested me).

The governor said he did not want me to leave, but did not want to stand in my way if I felt it would be something I wanted to do. I told him I would like to think about it a while, but I knew what I wanted to do if my wife agreed as I was sure she would.

I had already achieved out of the UN assignment everything that I wanted from it. Also, it was not the kind of thing I was interested in for the long run and nothing, I thought, could equal what I had already experienced in the few months I had been there. Furthermore, I really wanted to get back to Latin America and the chance of going to Peru as Deputy Chief of Mission appealed to me greatly as next career step. So it was agreed I could go in the summer which would jibe with the time the DCM in Lima would be leaving. For the next

several months of relatively slack time at the UN I enjoyed serving on our delegation to the Trusteeship Council and doing other odd jobs.

After attending the Bobby Kennedy-mandated “Counter- Insurgency Course” at the Foreign Service Institute, I arrived in Lima in early October, 1963. There, for the first time, I met “Johnny” Jones, surely one of the great gentlemen of the Service and with whom I had the great privilege of serving for nearly six years—an almost unprecedentedly long association in our Service.

Fernando Belaunde Terry, had recently been inaugurated President. A bit more that a year before, when it appeared that the old leftist liberal, Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, had won an election the military had nullified the results. However, such act was anathema to the Kennedy Administration, just starting to launch its Alliance for Progress, and strong US pressure was exerted to induce the military to call new elections, which resulted in Belaunde's victory. (There was a long history of bad blood between the military and Haya and a strong military determination that he would never be President. Once, in the early fifties, Haya had spent 5 whole years in asylum in the Colombian Embassy, always under observation by the military to thwart a possible escape).

Belaunde was a very attractive, educated and sensitive man; an architect, a dreamer, a builder, an intellectual and a wonderful person. He always seemed to me out of place as a politician (somewhat like my feelings for Adlai Stevenson) , even though he headed his own party, Accion Popular, made up mostly of young, aggressive nationalistic and leftist intellectuals and political activists.

Belaunde's great dream was his trans-Andean highway project, along the lower eastern slopes of the Andes on what he called the “eyebrow of the jungle.” Here, he was convinced, was where Peru's future lay and he would tirelessly and eloquently expound his theories to all visitors, illustrating with elaborate mockups in full relief.

Belaunde was of a very good, upper class family, well off but not big rich or part of the so-called oligarchy. (His uncle had served with distinction for many years as Peru's Ambassador to the UN and once, I believe, President of the General Assembly. When he died in New York the US showed him the unusual honor of flying his remains to Peru on a special military flight ordered by President Johnson. It might also be said here, parenthetically, that Haya de la Torre, much more a leftist than Belaunde and once considered pro-communist—although he was strongly anti-communist during my years in Peru-was also of such a good family and even a relative of Peru's Cardinal.

In any case, Belaunde was enormously popular as Peru thus emerged from many years of dictatorship—really since the Odria coup of 1948—and there was much hope that with the help of resources potentially available from the Alliance for Progress, the World and Inter-American Banks, the International Monetary Fund, etc. and with expanded foreign investment, an era of progress and growth might well be at hand. Also, by the time I arrived, Ambassador Jones had established a fine working relationship with the new President, a relationship of genuine friendship and mutual respect which was to continue unblemished, in spite of the difficulties which arose, during the five years Belaunde was President.

But the seeds of ultimate disaster were sown by Belaunde when, in his inaugural address on July 28, 1963, he promised that within 90 days he would solve the long-standing, bitter and emotional dispute between Peru and the International Petroleum Co a subsidiary of Esso) over the oil fields of La Brea y Parinas in northern Peru. The dispute over IPC's title to these lands dated back to the last century and though submitted to arbitration by the King of Spain, his award, handed down in 1905, settled nothing as emotional and nationalistic feelings opposing any foreign ownership of natural resources, especially oil collided with the legal rights which IPC firmly believed it had and with its willingness to defend them by all means at its disposal.

The policy of the powerful El Comercio newspaper to fan the flames with unrelenting incendiary attacks of any kind was a strongly contributing factor in the controversy. Also, the implacable animosity between the patriarch of the Miro Quesada family, owner of El Comercio, and Pedro Beltran, ex-Prime Minister and owner of La Prensa newspaper, merely fanned the flames as Beltran's efforts to treat the matter at least with some degree of journalistic ethics led to charges and counter charges reflecting on the honor and patriotism of one or the other in this aspect IPC was unfortunately caught in the middle.

The reality of such an issue was that no one in Peru would speak up for IPC no matter the integrity of its rights and actions, except, perhaps, its higher-ranking Peruvian officials. It was truly a no-win situation for the company counseling every effort to seek a fair solution, and on the whole I believe it really tried.

Belaunde's ill-advised promise—setting a deadline for himself on a problem which had been intractable for decades set the tone for everything that happened in the next five years and led, ultimately, to his overthrow by the military. Ironically this came only weeks after he had at last had reached a definitive settlement with IPC which did restore Peru's full sovereignty over the disputed territory and reserves and promised much needed new investment.

The American Embassy was involved; here we were starting off with a new, democratically elected government in an important Latin American country with which we wanted to have very strong and constructive relationships under the Alliance for Progress.(After all there were not that many democratic governments in Latin America at the time and Peru could serve as a model) We had a large and growing Peace Corps contingent to work at the level of the people of lowest standing, and we saw only two things which could possibly thwart our efforts to maybe made a showcase of Peru; on the one hand was the IPC case and on the other the territorial waters fisheries dispute.

Peru, Ecuador and Chile had joined to assert their novel doctrine of sovereignty over the adjacent seas up to 200 miles while our firmly held doctrine was the and traditional 3-mile limit asserted by maritime powers for centuries. The then still large US Tuna fleet (with Congressional backing which insured against loss if interfered with) was in no way disposed to respect Peru's claim while the Peruvian Navy was strongly and patriotically disposed to enforce it. The seeds of conflict thus were ready to sprout with potentially dire consequence. Peru, as had Chile and Ecuador, lost no time in making the marginal sea claim a fervent expression of patriotism to the point where unemotional and rational discourse of the subject was difficult at best. And even though I had many meetings with my counterpart in the Foreign Office on this subject the Secretary General and number two man, Javier Perez de Cuellar, later to achieve international stature and fame at the UN) and attended two international conferences on it—one in Chile and one in Buenos Aires—no real reconciliation of views were achieved, at least in my time.

The reason that these two cases were so important in the context of U.S. objectives at the time was that either was capable of triggering punitive US. foreign aid “amendments” which could cut off all of our assistance which we hoped might make of Peru a model country for progress under the Alliance for Progress.. The Hickenlooper amendment, for example, would require in exactly six months the cutoff of all US assistance in the event of an expropriation without compensation—i.e., confiscation— and this would include not only Alliance for Progress aid but also special quotas under the Sugar Act, which were of real benefit to Peru. Likewise, the US would also oppose international agency loans to such a country since US contributions to such agencies was very large and our vote a powerful one.

So with these menacing possibilities in the background the US and the Embassy sought to do all it could to keep Belaunde from tripping over the trap—the 90-day settlement pledge —which he had set for himself.

The deadline of ninety days would expire sometime on October 28. Ambassador Jones, by the time I arrived, had set the tone of his mission there by establishing excellent relations with the President. He also had good contacts with political leaders in the Congress, with the business community, Peruvian as well as American, and with the opposition, including the Odristas, the Christian Democrats and, discreetly even with the APRA Party leaders as well, including Haya de la Torre when he was in the country annually, (he would spend months lecturing at Oxford in England). Ambassador Jones became very popular with all concerned. He was a fine, professional, we had no better in our Service, and ideally suited for the difficult task he faced.

On the fisheries issue, in an effort to somewhat defuse on of the time bombs threatening his mission, Ambassador Jones succeeded early on in negotiating an informal modus operandi which effectively muffled the problem and soothed incidents which did occur for about two years or a bit more. During this time the Peruvians pretty much looked the other way or if a vessel was detained, a quick visit by an Embassy rep to the affected port would result in a “solution” without violence. Later we established a consular agency in northern Peru to be able to deal with such problems more promptly.

Once, about the middle of my long tour in Peru I happened to be on special assignment in Washington when a serious incident did occur. Capturing an American Tuna boat a Peruvian gunboat had machine gunned it with considerable superstructure damage but, fortunately, no serious injuries among the crew. San Diego Congressmen and others of the Tuna Lobby went ballistic and demanded punitive action. Our new Under Secretary of State, Eugene Rostow, an eminent international lawyer and brother of the more celebrated Walt Rostow, had been on the job about a week and was then Acting Secretary. He was so outraged by the Peruvian act, which violated his unemotional, legalistic and rational approach to a problem in international law, that he seemed disposed to order some destroyers to Peruvian waters.

An alarmed Assistant Secretary of State, grasping at any straw, told the Acting Secretary that I, with experience in dealing with the Peruvians on this subject, was at hand and he agreed to see me. I found him really outraged and much in the mood to take firm action but he did ask what I thought the Peruvians would do. I told him in effect that he could not expect Peruvians to act like Europeans might in such an event. Even though we were allies with Peru and that our Naval Mission there had effective contacts and a good program, he could expect the Peruvian Navy to take a most aggressive position. I said that should American destroyers appear in “their waters” on a disciplinary mission, it would be all too likely that a fervently patriotic Peruvian captain would relish to chance to attack a superior force even if defeat were certain.

Acting Secretary Rostow seemed almost disbelieving at first but, fortunately, contained his justified outrage and authorized the more traditional approach of Embassy representations and a “fix” for the Tuna Boat. It is to be noted that the Tuna Boats never lost as a generous Uncle Sam, through established legislation, always covered their losses then entered an always ignored claim against the offending government. “Tuna” congressmen, of course, knew this and after having captured hometown headlines by their demands in Washington for action, simmered down as well until the next round.

Our real worry was IPC. The whole five years history of that negotiation is something that I cannot go fully into here, but it was something of a never-never land tale which in retrospect seems not to have been the work of serious people. In part this reflected the often impractical and volatile personality of the President as he reacted to the multiple pressures brought to bear on him from the opposition parties, the media, the military and especially by the hot, nationalistic youth of his own Accion Popular Party.

I have no doubt that Belaunde wanted sincerely to solve this thing, but his technique was highly eccentric, often extremely so. Suddenly, for example, after long inaction he might decide he wanted to negotiate. So he would call the IPC representative and they might spend hours or even two or three days in a flurry of activity. They might even come to an

agreement, with everything supposedly solved, and he would say:, “We will come back at six o'clock tonight and we will sign it”. More than once the IPC reps would report with relief such a state of affairs to the Embassy, with a lift of optimism all around.

Then, we would hear, when they went back thinking it was fine, Belaunde would present them with a totally new paper stating with a straight face something like: “What we talked about before was your proposal”, and then, presenting them with a never before seen document, would say, “Here is the 'final solution'” and invite them to sign then and there. Hard as it may be to believe, that sort of thing or slight variation on it happened over and over again during the years of negotiations.

To put the best face on it for Belaunde, who I do not believe was a duplicitous person, I would have to say that political forces having a hold on him, especially the leftist elements of his own party, were the ones who reigned him in as whatever he thought he had achieved was not seen by the opposition before his seemingly capricious reversals.(As I got to know many of these young politicians in my years in Peru it became clear to me that the only finish agreeable to them would be the complete ouster of IPC so they could not have liked Belaunde's various “solutions”) And there was always El Comercio and the certainty of its powerful attack on anything which did not seize IPC's titles and investment. But I'm getting somewhat ahead of the story and should return to the setting and events before October 28, 1963.

As far as the negotiations were concerned, the Embassy was never a participant and viewed its role as that of a facilitator or intermediary, a provider of good offices to do what it could to keep the parties on the track and seeking a solution. Our overriding objective was to keep these problems from muddying the waters for the Alliance for Progress, the Kennedy administration's premier policy for Latin America, which sought to promote accelerated economic progress and social reform in Peru as a means of serving US national interests in that region. As these problems were a major threat to that aim, our

role was not to become involved in the negotiations directly, but to keep prodding both sides so they would keep negotiating so the process never completely broke down.

Toward the end of the 90 day deadline, when there was much speculation as to how Belaunde would meet his promise, negotiations went into high gear, culminating at the eleventh hour, or so IPC thought, in a final accord. At the end some high officials had come from New York so as to make needed decisions on the spot. However, our feeling of relief was short lived as Belaunde, for the first time of what became all too familiar thereafter, pulled the rug out from under the whole thing and shifted his position 180 degrees. That was just before his deadline and it had other consequences affecting U.S. policy.

A bit of background is needed here. Just after Belaunde was inaugurated, Theodoro Moscoso, then the Administrator for the Alliance for Progress, visited Peru and, talking about the potential for assistance to the Peruvian government, mentioned that an initial concessionary loan of about 64.5 million dollars then being processed could be announced as a means of “improving the atmosphere” for a settlement. Looking back, one can see that Moscoso's discussion with Belaunde had in effect, if not in so many words, served to link American aid to progress on the IPC dispute. Later in the week before negotiations broke down and all seemed to be going smoothly Ambassador Jones was instructed to tell Belaunde that we were prepared to announce this loan and had done so.

Well when the president kicked the thing over, the Embassy recommended that we put the matter on hold for a while, hoping it might help to stimulate Peru to early renewed talks and this was done. It was never the Embassy's intention that a freeze, so to speak, should be instituted. And, in fact, when negotiations were resumed early the following year, (we assumed in good faith) the Embassy recommended that we proceed with that particular loan and get on with our Alliance for Progress program. As the Embassy saw it, with the parties negotiating again, there was no justification for, in effect, applying the Hickenlooper Amendment. The loan was ready and it was time to announce it. We wanted to do that so

that IPC interests, in effect, would not be seen to dominate US policy. But, sadly, it did not happen even though, from time to time, AID did announce some lesser loans any did go forward with technical assistance and so on.

Thus what came to be known over the course of the next three years as a “freeze” was only selectively applied. At times the Embassy objected to it pretty strenuously because we felt it was not contributing to the solution but possibly hindering it. However, we finally learned that the interest in keeping up the pressure came from “the very highest level of the government” where this case was being followed. The occupant of the “highest level” of government was a man who was given to sudden and unpredictable changes of mind. With everything he must have had on his mind in those difficult days it seemed remarkable that he would enter into a relatively minor problem such as this. But we were told not uncertainly to ease up as decisions on this matter had to be cleared at the top, and sometimes it was “go” and sometimes “no go”.

I would like to interject at this point that whoever is going to use this oral history and wants to find out in detail what happened during those years, should obtain from the Department of State an airgram which I personally dictated in early summer of 1969 when I was charg# d'affaires after the departure of Ambassador Jones and just before my own departure for home leave and then Bolivia. I was the only person left who had gone through nearly six years of intimate contact with this problem and felt the whole thing should be brought and documented in a single narrative. So I prepared and submitted this very long airgram, fully documented and referenced, as a chronological history of the ups and downs of the negotiation and the consequences. As seen from our perspective. I believe it to be a valuable reference and once was pleased to receive a letter from Luigi Einaudi, then holding a high position in the Department, who was most complimentary in saying he had found it very invaluable for whatever project he was working on at the time.

Q: Did the so-called “freeze” prevent all cooperation between the US and Peru?

SIRACUSA: Not by any means. We continued to have a very large Peace Corps contingent actively engaged in their good works and USAID had an extensive technical cooperation program active in many fields. At one time the Peace Corps had grown to about 600 Volunteers, or more, if I remember correctly, and Ambassador Jones concluded that so many volunteers could not be efficiently managed or adequately productive. So with cooperation of the Peace Corps management we set about to reduce the number, mostly by attrition. When we got back to about 300 volunteers we thought the number about right and they continued to conduct useful programs. The problem was that with the initial, idealistic enthusiasm for the Corps, it had just grown like topsy and needed to be refocused, as it was.

Incidentally, for historic interest I might relate an anecdote about the beginnings of the Corps in Peru, related to me by Ambassador Jones. It seems that after President Kennedy announced the Corps' formation, the first director, Sargent Shriver, came to Peru to “sell” the idea. He met at our Ambassador's residence with the then Prime Minister, Pedro Beltran, a distinguished Peruvian and publisher of La Prensa. After making his pitch with passion and enthusiasm, Shriver was stunned by Beltran's response, more or less as follows: “Well, that's interesting. I'll take TWO”!! Apparently he did not understand what the US really had in mind and obviously did not stick with his original limit. The first Director in Peru was Frank Mankiewicz who got it off to such a flying start.

As for USAID in this period, we had two dedicated and able directors, Bill Dentzer and later Robert Culbertson who did their best to carry out an effective program given the informally imposed limitations. As mentioned, this was mostly technical assistance with modest supplemental financing and an occasional loan of relatively small scope, whenever the powers that be decided to allow such. Also, AID kept working on larger loan programs for significant infrastructure projects, always assuming that they should be ready to go when, as we hoped, normal activity would be allowed.

Q: What was the internal situation during these years in these years?

SIRACUSA: As you can imagine there was much political activity as Belaunde's relatively youthful, idealistic and “progressive” Accion Popular party was countered in the legislature by the APRistas, the Christian democrats and others all more or less jockeying for position and with a wary eye on the IPC matter and on how to respond to anything Belaunde might do, eventually. IPC was, emotionally, a central preoccupation of most literate Peruvians. Meanwhile, on the fringes, there were ominous developments foretelling future problems to come. We had some involvement in this so a bit of background is in order.

I mentioned earlier that before I left for Peru I had to take the Bobby Kennedy-mandated “Counter-Insurgency” course.(an odd intervention by the Attorney General, but such it was). The rationale was that as the Alliance for Progress stimulated accelerated social change and relieved the oppression under which the masses were held in place their expectations could rapidly outstrip any possible satisfaction through accompanying economic progress; thus they could be easy targets for extremist manipulators and Castro-inspired Marxists. It is to be remembered that Castro was riding high in those days and was considered to be a real subversive threat.

Out of such concerns there was developed the idea of forming in Peru a specially trained counter insurgency force which could maintain beneficial contact with the indigenous masses through civic action projects, financed in part by US aid and military “civic action” programs. When first proposed there was competition in Peru as to who would control the program. The US, wary of the military's interventionist potential and desiring a different image for the program, favored placing it in the Guardia Civil which was closer to the people. As the military would not have this it was finally decided to develop the force within the less known Guardia Republicana, essentially a corps of border and customs guards.

This being decided, rapid progress was made at the selected trans-Andean site of Mazamari and training, largely by CIA-type green-beret experts, got under way. The corps

name of “Sinchis” was adopted and the first public knowledge of them came when they surprisingly marched as a unit in the 28th of July, national holiday, parade wearing their distinctive Australian style slouch hats. I believe this was in 1967, but they were not yet ready to act in the guerrilla outbreak which had already occurred, as feared and the Army had to deal with it.

This outbreak started ominously and with stark cruelty typical of terrorism. A patrol of about 15 Guardia Civil elements was ambushed I believe near Ayacucho (site of a most radical university) and slaughtered to a man. But not only were they killed, they were obviously subjected to cruel torture and mutilation, much of it clearly before death. This was the opening challenge, designed to instill fear and to intimidate. And the whole country appeared to be outraged and in shock—all, that is, but Belaunde!

Belaunde's reaction was one of denial. Peru, he said, was an open democracy and guerrilla activity by definition could not occur in such an atmosphere. He then said the massacre was the work of “abigeos” which sent me to the dictionary for a Spanish word I had never heard. The word meant cattle-rustlers!!! And, such was the naivete of idealistic Belaunde who remained in denial almost all the way through a difficult and bitter military campaign against the guerrillas until their defeat in a battle near Cuzco at a place called Mesa Pelada, bald mountain. Here the guerrillas were defeated and their leadership killed or captured. There was a nasty rumor at the time, but never confirmed, that the leader of the group was taken up in a helicopter and thrown out as a means of “reverse-intimidation”. The Sinchis did not participate in this campaign as they were not ready yet but Belaunde's attitude did not help his poor image with the military who were to oust him about a year later.

As footnote I might mention that I am unaware of any activity undertaken by the Sinchis other than civic action before my departure from the country as guerrilla activity had been squelched, at least for a while, and I do not know the ultimate fate of the corps.. However- a note on the best of intentions being aborted.

One year after formal inauguration of the corps, Ambassador Jones flew to Mazamari to witness the first graduation ceremonies, complete with staged raids, parachute jumps, etc. and returned saying they looked quite impressive, able and well trained, as indeed they did. But a shoe was about to drop. The next day we learned that after the ceremony, the commander and several of his officers flew to a neighboring town to do a bit of celebrating and whoring around. For this purpose they used a sophisticated STOL aircraft we had provided, a Pilatus Porter.

The celebration over they decided to wow the locals with a low-level buzz job, possibly also to impress the obliging females and pave the way for future visits. Almost predictably, however, they flew into the local flagpole and crashed with total destruction of the expensive aircraft and death to all aboard, And so, back to the drawing boards,

Q: Well, that is an interesting account. But you mentioned Bobby Kennedy. Didn't he visit Peru in this Period?

SIRACUSA: Indeed he did, the time being in November, 1965. I remember well because he was there on the second anniversary of his brother's death and because I was “control officer” for his visit which was marked with tension because of his poor relations with President Johnson and because, on this visit, Bobby was clearly intending to establish his popularity in Latin America, as part of his brother's legacy, and thus begin his campaign to challenge Johnson in the next elections.

There was much press speculation about the visit especially since it was known that Kennedy had had a bad session with the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs, Jack Vaughn, and because, frankly, Kennedy's acolytes seemed bent on provoking the image of a Bobby challenge to LBJ and provoking the suspicion that the Embassies were under instruction to give him the cool treatment.

As a matter of fact there was no such instruction and I, as control officer (with much experience in that role with respect to junketing congressmen and senators) and with Ambassador Jones' full backing and support, never worked harder before or since to give a visitor the exact program and support he wanted. Since Peru was the first country on his itinerary there was much speculation as to what would happen.

As it turned out I spent the better part of three days with Bobby and Ethel and dealing with them was always a pleasure and they showed great consideration and understanding of the pressures on me as my wife, at the time, was in the hospital undergoing surgery. I cannot say the same for Kennedy's minions some of whom always seemed to want to provoke a fight. They publicly accused me of “preventing” a triumphal parade-type Kennedy entry into Lima from the airport. In reality I had offered to do all I could to arrange such but felt it would flop embarrassingly as it was, after all, not a holiday, the distance of travel was great and people were working.

At the Foreign Office, arranging a program with a Kennedy advance man, the Minister graciously offered a black-tie reception, at the Torre Tagle, the beautiful colonial era foreign ministry, only to be bluntly told that Kennedy was not interested in meeting any but the common people and that in any case “he did not even own a black tie”! He did, however, accept a small luncheon at the palace given by President Belaunde. Fortunately, my wife was able to leave her bed to attend this and also got to share a memorable personal experience with the Kennedys themselves.

Some personal memories of Bobby's visit: Literally carrying Ethel out of our binational center where we were mobbed by enthusiastic students; Ethel frantically asking me where Bobby was after I had stuffed her into the car (he had climbed on top to divert the crowd and then came in through a window after my chauffeur began carefully to drive away); being asked by Madam Cruchaga, the elegant and gracious sister of Belaunde, acting as his hostess, why the Kennedys seemed only interested in seeing the worst of Peru (as we toured yet another and perhaps the most miserable barriada in central Lima); and

seeing Bobby and then most popular matador, El Cordobes, whip off their coats to make bullfighting passes at some small but dangerously horned antelope used as guards at the fabulous Mujica Gallo Inca gold museum and safari trophy room.

Really notable about that vignette was that Bobby and El Cordobes actually looked alike, being of almost identical stature and features and with the same unruly shock of blonde hair over the forehead. All of this prefaced a really enjoyable farewell dinner at Lima's delightful Granja Azul where we all had a good, comradely time and where Kennedy's aides even showed the good manners always typical of their principal.

In the end, the trip had to be counted as a great success by Bobby, in spite of the attitude of his staff, and he acknowledged in a gracious letter of thanks to me his appreciation for all that the Embassy had done.

There was no doubt in Peru that Bobby carried the mantle of his martyred brother who was almost literally revered in that country. The outpouring of grief at the President's death was overwhelming and within a hour Belaunde and his entire cabinet called en masse on the Ambassador to demonstrate their feelings. Two years later it was nearly repeated when Bobby was assassinated and I, as Charge' at the time, arranged a community mass to coincide with that in the US, as the Ambassador had done in the case of the President.

Q: That is all fascinating and I'm sure of real interest for oral history researchers, but to get back to the narrative, how did the IPC case work out and what were its effects?

SIRACUSA: ESSO, after the first breakdown in October, 1963, sent a remarkable man to head IPC and carry out the negotiations. His name was Fernando Espinosa, a New Deal economist and one-time advisor to President Roosevelt, I understood. He had been with the ESSO for twenty years and was a really fine corporate diplomat. Of Cuban birth he spoke absolutely perfect Spanish and notwithstanding their adversarial positions, he established a fine and respectful personal relationship with President Belaunde.

He went through all these years of absolute frustration when, sometimes for months nothing would happen, absolutely nothing at all;, then, all of a sudden he would get a call from the president and they would go into whirlwind negotiations often leading to apparently real progress. Then, Belaunde might say, “come back tomorrow afternoon and we will put in the final touches;” then, as too often happened, the appointment would not be kept and nothing would happen, maybe for weeks. Then Belaunde might call him back, and, as though nothing had happened before, present a totally new position. What was really going on was that every time Belaunde came up to something his advisors would weigh-in and take it apart and Belaunde, obviously, would cave in (the dates and nature of each of these incidents is documented in the mentioned airgram).

As an example of how frustrating this was I might interject here that in the background of the pre-October 28 negotiations was a long-standing Peruvian claim that IPC owed $50 million in back taxes. The company absolutely rejected this claim but in an effort to get a solution it offered (in context of the first solution in October, 1963) to pay this amount over the life of the new contract it sought, not as back taxes, but as a premium for a new concession. Also involved was a commitment by Esso to extensive investment in oil exploration and, hopefully development, in the trans-Andean upper Amazon region.

That early “agreement” however died aborning and, in the ensuing years, this claim for “back taxes” grew and grew until it ultimately became a claim for “unjust enrichment” which at its peak totaled about $840 million. Behind this, in IPC's view “fantastic” claim, was the fine, sensationalist hand of the Miro Quesada family's El Comercio newspaper, in league with extremists of all kinds, who had no desire whatsoever to reach a settlement and who eventually conjured up a claim so large that they could actually confiscate IPC and end up claiming further reimbursement rather than paying any compensation for its expropriation.

The “unjust enrichment” idea also was known as the “Montesinos Doctrine” after a radical professor at the Marxist Centro de Altos Estudios Militares (CAEM), a sort of officers war college which did much to indoctrinate the military with xenophobic, Marxist-influenced

political and social ideas. The tragic dividend of such training became all too clear in the failed and disastrous policies undertaken by the military dictatorship which overthrew and succeeded Belaunde-Terry.

The “justification” for all this can be found in the aforementioned airgram and its enclosed or referenced documentation.

Through it all, the Embassy maintained contact with all elements and was in regular, discreet but not clandestine contact with APRA, the leading opposition party. At one point when Belaunde and Espinosa seemed to be close to agreement, Belaunde was afraid that APRA might viciously attack any agreement, no matter if actually served Peruvian interests fairly. So both thought it might be useful if the Embassy could contact Haya de la Torre and try to counsel a statesmanlike, non-political attitude for the good of the country.

Espinosa conveyed this desire to the Embassy and with the Department's approval I was sent to see Haya at Oxford in England. I met him there for tea on a Sunday afternoon and after a long talk, in which I conveyed my understanding of the situation as best I could, Haya did promise that if such a critical point did arise APRA would not attack the President and authorized the message to be conveyed, which it later was. This [act, secret at the time} was as close as we ever came to entering the negotiations as such but in reality all we did was deliver messages. However, since that particular flurry of negotiations did not produce anything, the matter continued to drag on, Also, at another time, Walter Levy an internationally prominent oil economist in New York was brought down to analyze the issues and perhaps give constructive suggestions to both sides. But this also was not fruitful.

The Ambassador was extremely effective in cultivating good relations with all parties; with the President and his cabinet, with all opposition party leaders, with the senior military, with journalists, and with the business community, Peruvian and American. With all of these was but one message, an appeal to support a constructive solution to this problem

which could promote stronger relations between our two countries and a better future for Peru. We had reason to believe also that a solution showing respect for property rights and contractual agreements would encourage important foreign investments in Peru by interests carefully watching developments. (Southern Peru Copper Co., for example)

At one point, in order to help focus on whatever reality the numbers might contain, it was arranged for Walter Levy, a renowned international petroleum expert, to come to Peru and consult with all parties in hopes that he might see some light in the tunnel. Levy worked hard at it for some time and interviewed all concerned; but in the end this effort came to nought as Peruvians especially showed no inclination to modify their more extreme demands.

As the negotiations went on and became more complex with the introduction by Peru of new demands, Espinosa continued to show great patience and flexibility in somehow devising means of dealing with them. Finally, in July, 1968 in his annual speech to the legislature on Peruvian national day, President Belaunde announced dramatically that as a result of the latest negotiations he had an agreement. But again he put the cart before the horse and boxed himself in with a deadline as an agreement really did not then exist.

It was true, however, that there was a new basis for negotiations which showed much promise; but they had been that far before. As if to make matters worse, Belaunde then announced that on August 13 he would go to Talara to the site of the first oil well there and plant the flag, thus symbolizing Peru's recuperation of complete sovereignty over this area.

In typical Belaunde fashion, he waited until two nights before his deadline and then instituted unceasing, marathon and whirlwind negotiations. He, Espinosa and others continued in sessions for twenty-four hours and then on into the next night. At last, at dawn on the 13th, they signed this agreement called the Act of Talara and billed as the final, the ultimate solution of this problem. Then they all piled into an airplane, exhausted, disheveled, sleepy and unshaven and went flying up to Talara.

From the airport they proceeded to the historic well site where Belaunde symbolically “planted the flag.” Then Belaunde and his accompanying ministers by turn, and even Espinosa speaking for the IPC, made emotional, happy, celebratory and mutually complimentary speeches. I have the tapes somewhere.

Back in Lima, and after catching up on their sleep, there was a series of banquets celebrating the affair. Then all of a sudden the whole thing began to unravel as one of the ministers declared that the “eleventh” page of the Act of Talara agreement a “critical” page, was missing!!!.

With this, El Comnercio, bitter opponent of the IPC and stimulator of outrageous claims, launched a violent yellow journalistic attack which sowed suspicions and stirred up passions claiming the whole thing to be an invalid farce and sellout of Peru's just national interests. Thus was a few days of euphoria followed by days of dark charges of secret skulduggery. A page was missing—a page was altered—needed initials to validate changes were smudged—take your choice).

It is true that the document showed real signs of its middle of the night, violent “Caesarean” birth. It was not clean and properly put together as it would have been under calmer circumstances; but insofar as we were able to determine, it was all there as intended and there were no missing pages, clauses, phrases or anything else. In a few days it exploded into an absolute crisis giving the military both opportunity and excuse to stage a coup.

I can't remember exact date when it happened, but a couple of weeks later, in the middle of the night, I heard tanks rolling and went down to the Embassy. It was a quick, efficient and bloodless coup in which no shots were fired. Tanks simply rolled up to the Palace gates and took over. Belaunde was whisked away and quickly placed aboard an airplane bound for Argentina and the coup's leader, General Juan Velasco, took over. He was to rule Peru as dictator for a number of fateful years during which the military prospered as a

class (with lots of new toys and perks and pay) while the economy suffered and declined and desperate social problems were ignored.

Quickly Velasco initiated a series of ever more consequential actions which, within three weeks, resulted in an outright confiscation of the ESSO/IPC. First they just took over the La Brea y Parinas oilfields. Then they faced a dilemma because IPC's refining and distribution system throughout the whole country was owned by the Company and was never involved if the oilfield dispute. The government could not refine or distribute any product of the wells unless IPC participated and service stations were running dry.

They then tried to sell crude oil to IPC but the company refused to buy what it said was legally theirs. To get around this crisis which was putting them in a bad light legalities notwithstanding, IPC offered to take the crude on the basis of paying for production costs but not the crude itself.

Well this led to further friction and conflicts so that a couple of weeks later the army sent troops, took over the ESSO headquarters, expropriated all assets in the country and kicked all IPC executives out, including their highest ranking Peruvians.

There we were and the fat was in the fire. From that moment on the Hickenlooper Amendment clock began to tick. It gave us six months, from early October when it happened, until early April when, absent “prompt, adequate and effective” compensation, all aid would be cut off for Peru. For the rest of 1968 nothing happened as we marked time and wondered. The Embassy however began quiet planning for evacuation of Americans should the application of punitive measures produce a violently anti-American reaction, as we thought well might happen.

When President Nixon assumed office in January things began to move as the new administration did not want to start with a full-blown and possibly dangerous crisis in Peru. And we explored many avenues for a way to resume negotiations, but to no avail.

Finally, responding to the Embassy's recommendation that the President send a personal representative to explore avenues of settlement, President Nixon sent Jack Irwin (later to become Under Secretary of State) as his special emissary with the rank of Ambassador. Irwin arrived in mid March of 1969 and began talks with the Peruvian government. The objective was to restore IPC-government negotiations or otherwise to avoid if possible automatic application of the Hickenlooper Amendment(which nobody wanted even though it was the law) while at the same time fulfilling US policy obligations toward an American interest which had been confiscated without compensation. In general, the executive branch of our government did not think such automatic, punitive acts such as the Hickenlooper Amendment were wise or effective law; but was nonetheless bound by them. A broadly held view was that such laws were more counterproductive than they were effective.

Things seemed to be almost unsolvable until we uncovered a plausible delaying tactic, anything to buy time. There was a final step under Peruvian law which hadn't yet been taken and the Hickenlooper Amendment does not go into effect until all recourse had been exhausted. This step was an Administrative Court procedure needed to finalize the expropriation in Peruvian law and which would not come up for several weeks or months. While a technicality, this could get us past the April deadline and buy time within which something good might happen. While Ambassador Jones did not think much of the chances, he presented the idea to Ambassador Irwin.

Nothing better having turned up to kindle hope, Ambassador Irwin decided to return to Washington to report to the Department and to the President and he took me with him. With emotions running so high in Peru we experienced our first terrorist-type threats, phoned to the Embassy Marines, actually against my wife and children who were then evacuated from Lima for a while. Responding to this and the possible danger of commercial flight, the Department sent a special airplane to pick us up.

On Saturday morning, the day before Easter Sunday of that year, we had a meeting in the State Department with Secretary Rogers and all the high officers with interest in this matter —I remember in particular the Under Secretary of State, Elliot Richardson, later Attorney General during the “Saturday night massacre” of Watergate), and Frank Shakespeare, the Director of USIA.

Ambassador Irwin outlined the situation and asked me to describe the potential means whereby we might bypass the April deadline and buy time for a possible solution. We had been told by the desk officer who met us at the airport that this proposal was not going to fly but it was all we had. In any case when I started to talk I sensed a skepticism around the table until Secretary Rogers, who was listening intently, asked a few questions indicating he might be taken with the idea. And a change in his demeanor seemed to have a magical effect on others. Finally, after much discussion, the Secretary made the decision that we should explore it with company representatives and Congressional leaders if we could find any on Easter weekend) and go the next day to present it to the president. We did see a couple of senators in addition to ESSO reps who expressed no objection.

The next morning we flew to Coral Gables to meet President Nixon at his summer residence. The president's helicopter picked us up and took us over to a little landing pad close to his house. When we got there he was at church with his family and we were met by Bebe Rebozo, the President's friend, who, it was said, had been partly responsible for his acquiring that property.

When the president arrived we spent two and a half hours with him. He was very relaxed —sat back with his feet on a coffee table—and listened to the presentation given by Ambassador Irwin, in which I participated. Finally, the president said, “Fine, that is what we should do.” He recognized this as a welcome time buyer and observed that we could, as long as it could be strung out, keep pressure on Peru by not approving any help and

blocking that by others. The main thing was to avoid announcing that we were doing so which was the inherent defect in laws such as the Hickenlooper Amendment.

So we flew back to Peru where Ambassador Irwin met with the Peruvian officials and outlined (much to their relief) what we were proposing to do, and with their understanding that the Hickenlooper Amendment was still there, but was not going to be applied at that time. The main thing I saw in this was the chance to avoid the point of no return. As long as you could keep talking you might find some way out of this.

Looking back, to condense the remainder, Ambassador Jones left Peru for his new assignment and I stayed as charg# d'affaires for the last four months of my own stay. The next key day after April when the Hickenlooper Amendment was supposed to be applied was, I think, in late July or early August of that year, when the administrative procedure should have run its course. But by that time we figured another way of stretching it out and with a new President, there was no strong Congressional pressure. Also, ESSO, knowing the U.S. had not given in on its claims and rights, also seemed willing to play for the long haul, and so no great pressure from that quarter.

I left Peru in August of 1963 and turned over the mission to Ambassador Belcher and that continued to be the policy. I went as ambassador to Bolivia after that. I was fairly close by, seeing what was going on. By one means or another the solution, if you want to call it that, stayed in place. One of the points which I had made to President Nixon was that I thought that sanctions were the worst thing in the world to apply, that they only produce terrible animosity, wounded feelings, and probably violence, and that there was no reason for us to follow a policy based on forcibly announced application of sanctions when we could do it anyway without announcing it. So we avoided the Hickenlooper Amendment. But if we avoided the Hickenlooper Amendment there was nothing forcing us to give economic help to Peru. We could still drag our feet on everything. In that way, over time we could apply pressure which would in time bring them to their senses without announcing it as a punitive act.

That is exactly the policy which was helpful. I think it was either four or maybe five years later that the problem was solved. It was worked out through the Inter-American Bank, I believe. The Green Mission - so-called - was sent Peru to negotiate on potential bank loans. But there was the fact of negative US vote because of the IPC confiscation. So, what was finally worked out was that in this context, Peru did provide funds as compensation to IPC although it was never called that. There were “painted windows on painted doors” so to speak. Everybody emerged satisfied with a solution from his perspective. For Peru, IPC and the long-festering La Brea y Parinas problem was finally over with Peruvian sovereign ownership fully reestablished over its natural resource. Peru could say it did not pay compensation. But ESSO had money in its pocket which it regarded as compensation and that was that; not as money as they might have wanted, but compensation nonetheless.

I think that the avoidance of the Hickenlooper Amendment at that time was a major achievement. I think that had it been applied disastrous things could have happened in terms of American lives and property. All that was avoided. And, compensation was achieved without it.

The great tragedy was that the military intervened at a time when Peru had gone through a heartening five year experience with democracy and was preparing for elections in the next year when in our opinion a very attractive, well qualified candidate might have been elected. A former mayor of Lima, Luis Bedoya Reyes was a lawyer, a Christian Democrat and a skilled politician. He very likely might have been elected President with the support of the strong APRA party, whose leader, Haya de la Torre, would never have been accepted by the military. But Bedoya had a working relationship with that party and such an administration might have governed well, carrying on the democratic tradition established by Belaunde.

The military intervention interrupted Peru's democratic experience for many years and had dire economic consequences as foreign investment and financing dried up right when it

was so desperately needed. They also instituted a CAEM-inspired, sweeping land reform program which tried to make labor-cooperatives of the great sugar, cotton and other plantations of the coastal areas, with disastrous results on productivity.

It was a true tragedy because many of the economic problems which were facing Peru had been put under way of solution by a new prime minister who Belaunde had appointed just before he announced his fateful “solution”. He had also recruited a capable young Finance Minister, Manuel Ulloa, and they had started a number off economic measures which were looking very good. All of that was destroyed by this military intervention with its disastrous consequences.

It was years later and after Velasco's death that Peru emerged from the military dictatorship which eventually threw in the towel in frustration over failures. Velasco himself, always a drinker and philanderer, lost a leg in his later years. Unconfirmed rumor had it that he was shot by his fed-up wife who apparently had caught him in flagrante delicto.

Q: What ever happened to Belaunde-Terry?

SIRACUSA: He stayed in Argentina for awhile and then went to Washington where I believe he was a visiting professor at American University. I met him there a couple of times when I was in Washington. When the military threw in the towel (after General Velasco's death) and after years of failure, Belaunde returned as President and served a full term. The present president, Garcia,(1989), the first APRA party president, succeeded Belaunde so Peru has made some political progress: two consecutive democratic presidents and power held by a party which, although representing many Peruvians, would not before have been tolerated by the military. That is grounds for hope although the legacy of deferred economic and social change and progress leaves a frightening prospect and challenge for any future government, more so in a country undergoing explosive population growth.

I recall a discussion with the then Minister of Health in about 1967 in which I cited the alarming statistic that over 60% of all Peruvians were under 15 years of age and would soon be making children in prodigious numbers. The Minister dismissed any concern on the grounds that Belaunde"s vaunted dream of developing the trans-Andean region, the "eyebrow of the jungle" as he called it, would provide ample opportunity for jobs and economic growth.

Before leaving Peru I might relate an incident of some historic interest. There was much excitement in Peru in July, 1969 when completion of a large, satellite receiving antennae insured that we would be able to see TV coverage of the moon landing attempt. And for the event, one radio station in town erected a large screen so that people without TV might see. Needless to say the event was gripping. I had arranged for several TV sets at my home and a number of Embassy families were gathered to witness the landing.

I was Charg# at the time, Ambassador Jones having left the post, and on the spur of that moment decided on a somewhat daring course: we would hold a "splash-down" party at the elegant Residence, inviting only the President, his cabinet, the Ambassadors and wives in the diplomatic Corps, the Cardinal of Peru and a few select others. Plans were hastily made and invitations prepared, to be hand-delivered only AFTER the escape vehicle had been safely joined with the Apollo and the return voyage under way.

Splashdown was to be several days later at about 11:30 am, Peruvian time, and I believe our attendance was almost 100%, except for General Velasco who did not come. We served traditional refreshments and had at least 10 TV sets around the Residence to monitor the occasion. Tension and expectancy became almost unbearable when the capsule entered to burn zone of reentry with communication blackout. Finally, when the parachuting capsule was sighted and screened, the place erupted into cheers and tears of joy; the first to embrace me being Cardinal Landazuri Ricketts followed by the Foreign Minister and everyone else in turn.

When calm was restored champagne was served as I presented to the Foreign Minister a two foot globe of the moon, with a flag marking the spot on the Sea of Tranquility where the Eagle had landed. A silver plaque read: “Presented to His Excellency, President Juan Velasco, by Ernest V. Siracusa, Charg# d'affaires, a.i. of the United States, to commemorate the safe return from mankind's first landing on the Moon. Lima, July, 1963.” The Foreign Minister graciously accepted this on behalf of the absent President. Insofar as I am aware, no other of our Embassies held such an event. One guest who bravely endured this occasion was the newly arrived Soviet Ambassador, Lebedev, who doubtless would have preferred something else, being the heir to Soviet achievement with the first Sputnik.

Q: As ambassador to Bolivia in late 1969 to mid-1973 you witnessed the growth of terrorism, and later in Uruguay, where you served as ambassador from 1973 to 1977. How did this effect the conduct of diplomacy with these countries?

SIRACUSA: Before addressing that question I think should provide a little background regarding my previous experience with Bolivia and my observation of it from neighboring Peru for the past six years. As you know Bolivia had been chronically unstable and since Peru is a destination post for possible evacuation of Americans in an emergency, messages from there to the Department, especially ones during crises and Bolivia is often in crisis) are repeated to Embassy Peru. Therefore I was quite well acquainted with what Ambassadors Henderson and Castro my immediate predecessors) had been going through.

Also, in 1958/59, in the Department, I was Director of West Coast affairs Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile), and in that job Bolivia was the most difficult. We were then intimately involved in the government's day to day economic decision making through our AID-sponsored Stabilization Program which was trying to bring hyperinflation under

control as a prerequisite for some degree of meaningful development and economic progress.

This was during the Siles Zuazo government and the program was directed by John Eder, recruited by AID to act virtually as economic czar in Bolivia. In the long run the program was reasonably successful but inflation-controlling stabilization means sacrifice and, unfortunately, such must be literally squeezed out of those having no margin and literally nothing to give.

Day by day President Siles, a very courageous man, was literally forced to make hard decisions (today raise the price of gasoline—taxi drivers are furious—tomorrow the price of bread—everybody is furious, and so on) and anger went not only to the President and his Bolivian advisors but to John Eder and the whole US Mission as well.

Such an intimate relation in another sovereignty ought to be avoided if at all possible but in Bolivia there appeared to be no alternative. At my end, in Washington, for a while I and my counterpart in AID would have to decide each Friday night whether to allow a payment of about $250,000 to the Central Bank for currency stabilization or to hold it up as pressure for Siles to take the next hard step which the program demanded. Every time we applied pressure we wondered what the fallout might be. It was not fun.

In time pressure in the Bolivian cooker was high indeed and it did not take much to ignite an explosion. The catalyst this time was an unfortunate TIME magazine article filed by a visiting correspondent which quoted an exasperated but unnamed US official as saying the country should be given back to the Indians or divided among its neighbors.

Instantly, after TIME arrived in Bolivia, the combination of ever-present anti-American agitators and legitimate outrage of indignant Bolivians who had almost nothing left but their pride created a veritable explosion and violent attacks on the American Embassy. Pressure was so great and danger so apparent that our then charg# d'affaires decided to call for an evacuation of all dependents to Peru and burned the Embassy's files in

anticipation of a hostile takeover; and this was done at considerable cost and no little danger as the evacuees had somehow to be brought up from the lower residential suburbs through the center of town, and the demonstrations.

When the then Secretary of State, Christian Herter, read the messages on file burning and evacuation he was outraged and I was summoned to his office, FORTHWITH!! I arrived to find that wonderful gentleman in a considerable state of agitation. His mind was focused on the “culprit” who could have said such an outrageous thing who should be jerked out immediately for due punishment.

When it came my turn so speak I think I startled the Secretary very much by replying long these lines:

“Mr. Secretary, I don't think punishment is the point as I and my staff up here often find Bolivia so frustrating that we say more or less the same thing each night before going home. That is just letting off steam and given the multiple pressures of being in Bolivia the temptation must be even greater. Moreover, we don't know if anyone actually said that to the correspondent; but even if someone did the real culprit has to be TIME for its irresponsibility in printing it. Anyone with even rudimentary knowledge of Bolivia should know not to do such a thing.”

I must say this for Secretary Herter, who got the point immediately and, as a man of action, in seconds had Henry Luce on the phone and was chewing him out. A bit later I was able to tell the Secretary that the raw data filed by the correspondent (which I had a means of obtaining) never quoted anyone as having made the fateful remark. As is known, Time correspondents then did not write stories, they filed reams of information and the stories were written by editors in New York. In this case, clearly, the fateful and costly sentence had been conjured up to make a punchier story—and so it was.

A few days later I was sent on an “incognito” mission to Bolivia to evaluate the situation and the justification if any for the drastic action taken. I found no fault with the Charge's

action—you have to be on the spot in Bolivia to know how trapped one feels in times of tension and especially when surrounded by dynamite laden miners—but recommended a formal inspection of the post to try to reconcile frictions between some AID elements and the Embassy proper. This was promptly done and in a few weeks things returned to "normal" with the return of dependents from their holiday in Peru, and the arrival of a new Ambassador.

This diversion is a bit long but I believe it helps indicate my frame of mind as I, with the anticipation and optimism of all new career Ambassadors going to their first post, contemplated what might come in Bolivia. So, to return to your question:

Mainly the prospect of terrorism affected the conduct of diplomacy as it impinged upon the free movement of the ambassador and his family, the people in the diplomatic community. And the atmosphere of threat and tension under which we worked. There was always, as well, a present though suppressed psychological concern.

I suppose in Bolivia I was the one who was most exposed at that time but I had no concern for myself as I was always pretty well guarded at all times—and at times very heavily guarded. My worst personal worry was for my wife and children even though they had guards as well. But I knew how ineffective but one guard, no matter how loyal, might be against determined kidnappers or worse. The fact that there had been threats against my wife and children at a moment of tension in Peru, and that later there were similar threats in Bolivia, did nothing to ease my mind. One could not allow himself, however, to be dominated by these fears and therefore become a residential prisoner or recluse. There was, after all, a job to be done. So we did our best to lead as normal lives as the circumstances permitted and finally, when it seemed too much, I sent my family away.

One thing I seemed destined for was a certain sameness of problems. For example, while I was on home leave preparatory to going to Bolivia, General Avant, who had succeeded as Vice President to the Presidency after General Barretos was killed in a helicopter

crash (thought by many to be of suspicious origin) surrounded himself with a very young and radical leftist group of cabinet ministers. (One of them for example, the Minister of Information, although having a mother living in Washington, D. C., was paranoically anti-American. and from his position had much to do with the kind of poisonous press which I had to endure.) In any case, in one of its earliest acts the new administration expropriated the Gulf Oil Company which had been successfully exploiting its concession in Bolivia for about 12 years.

So here I was, relaxed in my brother's office in Houston, when he handed me a press notice that Bolivia had expropriated Gulf. From the frying pan into the fire was my first thought and that did prove to be the case. With IPC thankfully behind me at last, my first challenge in Bolivia in my own post as Ambassador would be to deal with another expropriation of an American oil company, and the inevitable passion which such cases aroused. (It seems an inevitable fact that foreign capital in natural resources-minerals- or public utilities is a magnetic target for nationalistic antipathy)

Apparently, Ovando's radical young ministers, believing that Peru had been able to confiscate without punitive retaliation or consequences, were emboldened to influence the somewhat senile old general to be bold and do the same. What they did not see was the fact that the US had not abandoned its principals in Peru but was just going for a longer term solution.

But the cases were in no way comparable. Gulf was operating on the basis of a relatively new and modern contract of the mid-fifties and Bolivia was benefiting considerably from their discoveries and exploitation of oil and gas reserves of some consequence. There was no background of decades of bitter feeling or of old concession conflict with current constitutional law, as was the case in Peru. Thus the Bolivian act, seemingly on the spur of the moment, really appeared to be an opportunistic grab, pure and simple.

But to return to your question on terrorism for a moment I should say that before I arrived in Bolivia the whole system of personal security guards had been set up by my predecessors. We had not yet come to that in Peru although we had experienced some of it during Ambassador Irwin's mission because of the threats mentioned before.

There had been a much more volatile situation in Bolivia because of the Castro-inspired, Che Guevara guerrilla campaign which eventually resulted in his death at the hands of the Bolivian Army—with a considerable involvement of the CIA. Accusations of such involvement produced an atmosphere which called into being the need for protection of our then Ambassador and the set up of the guard system.

Another thing which colored my mission there was the following: After the announcement of my appointment as Ambassador to Bolivia, which came just after my departure from Peru, a very leftist TIME-format style Peruvian magazine called OIGA (Listen) devoted a cover story to me, picture and all, accusing me of being the “hidden” cerebro (brain) of the CIA in Latin America. This magazine was published by a certain Pablo Ugartua whom I knew. We never agreed on anything, but I would occasionally see him at social functions and discuss aspects of current affairs. Keeping contact with him was within our efforts to seek exposure to all points of view and his was never a compatible or sympathetic one.

I do not know why they did it but the timing seemed suspiciously related to Bolivia's oil expropriation, following Peru's. In any case, knowing Bolivia's paranoia about the CIA he could not have chosen a more effective way to do me mischief than to fabricate, as he did, this story of my supposed CIA connection.

The real truth is that I never had anything to do with the CIA except to the extent that there were CIA elements in our Embassies in which I served—but I was never one of them. In fact, I was one of the youngest persons admitted to the career Foreign Service, at age 21 and directly out of Stanford University, years before there ever was a CIA, and I had no incentive or desire to follow any other career.

But Ugartua and his associates developed a whole imaginary career for me. They said I was instrumental in masterminding the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1963, even though I was then in Peru and had never been in the DR. They stated I had been kicked out of Chile as persona non grata, even though I had never been assigned there, and so forth.

While a total invention, such accusations could be very damaging and in fact dogged me for the remainder of my career. Oiga's report was immediately picked up by all the leftist or communist organs of similar bent in the world and, once the dope is lodged in the morgues of such places, it just grows and grows by further repetition and invention. Pravda, Tass, Radio Havana and other LA publications similar to OIGA helped retail the lies and further develop them with fantasy. In such cases, where agenda and objective control, truth is of no consequence and lies and inventions just grow and grow.

About four years later when I was in Uruguay, President Velasco in Peru, in a press conference where he was blasting a supposed CIA act, took occasion to claim that he had kicked me out of Peru as persona non grata. He was immediately challenged by Enrique Zileri, publisher of the widely read progressive magazine CARETAS, who asked why, if I were so dangerous, had I so freely visited Peru on numerous occasions since, and why had the then Secretary General of the Foreign Office honored me with an official farewell luncheon at the elegant Club Nacional. Velasco, angry with such questioning, muttered that if that were so then the person responsible should be fired (at that time he was Peru's Ambassador in Canada).

Zileri, a friend and neighbor knew well of my visits many of which were publicized as reporters, hanging around the airport, would recognize me and conduct brief interviews. Also Velasco, in his alcohol dimmed mind, apparently forgot that I had stayed on through Ambassador Belcher's presentation of credentials and that my last official act in Peru the next week was to pay a farewell call on him in his office. Nonetheless, Velasco's charges were widely publicized in Uruguay (which did nothing to improve the security of myself

and my family where the Tupamaros were a threat) and, of course went into the Marxist morgues for interminable repetition and elaboration.

Still years later, when I was meeting for a day with political science students at Rice University, I was quizzed repeatedly about the fancied deeds of my alleged CIA past. It seems that Excelsior newspaper in Mexico City had recently devoted a page to a rehash of this old turkey and that this in turn had been repeated in a London publication — the name of which I now can't recall although LATIN seems to come to memory— which was part of the reading matter to which to students had been exposed, hence my grilling. I came away from that encounter wondering about the guidance if any given by American professors whose students seemed so uncritically to have swallowed this garbage.

When OIGA's blast first came out there was a great outcry in Bolivia and pressure from Ovando's most radical ministers to revoke my agreement which had already been granted. When the Department of State very firmly rejected the charges and refused to back down on my nomination, Ovando relented. But a somber cloud had been floated over my arrival in Bolivia where I was to be treated to ubiquitous graffiti demanding MUERA CIACUSA (death to Ciacusa—a new name for me) and FUERA CIACUSA (get out, Ciacusa) painted on walls along the single access road from El Alto airport at 13,400 feet to La Paz city at 12,500 feet.

And I remember too well the effect on my family when they arrived a few weeks later. My two daughters, then 11 and 15, were very brave little girls, but they disliked the fact that I was to be an Ambassador. They said when I first told them of my appointment that it would “ruin” their lives because they thought it would set them apart from the other children and they did not want to be in that position. So when I met them at the airport and they got their first glimpse of the striking city of La Paz far below they kept saying—”Oh, Daddy, it is so beautiful” while studiously looking the other way as we passed all the threatening graffiti.

One can imagine the concern my wife and I felt for the poisonous imagery injected into our daughters' minds, and our feelings the first day they set out for school, chauffeured and with guards. But one must learn to live with it or leave and we did not choose to do that.

It seems that most, if not all, Latin American countries have publications such as OIGA in Peru which are “mysteriously” financed and mutually supporting. So, as though OIGA's attack was not enough, in the week of my arrival in Bolivia, MARCHA, the Uruguayan counterpart of OIGA, published its own cover-story rehash based on a report of its Bolivian “correspondent's” who had investigated Bolivian reaction to the original. Arrival of Marcha in La Paz produced a new bout of screaming headline treatment in Bolivian papers, egged on, no doubt, by the aforementioned Minister of Information Bailey, and the inevitable request for my comment and reaction. Not a very happy welcome to ones first post as Ambassador.

Although it is policy not to dignify such accusations with comment, I was so outraged that I could not resist saying it was all untrue as President Ovando well knew because of his previous investigation. In a way that was a challenge to him but it seemed to work as he did not contradicted me and, happily, the Department did not comment on my act. In the long run I believe it helped. The fact is, however, that the Bolivian media were literally paranoid on the subject of the CIA after the Che Guevara affair, this notwithstanding the fact that whatever the CIA may have done was in collaboration with and at the request of the Barretos government, in which Ovando had been Vice President.

So I was constantly guarded and traveled in an armored car with a follow car and sometimes with a lead car as well. Guards were armed with pistols, Uzi machine guns, sawed-off shotguns and teargas. My residence was under constant guard and my wife and children had guards. We all had gas masks beside our beds and radios for communication with the Embassy Marine Guards and with other officers homes, and my wife and children were regularly briefed on security measures by the chief Security Officer. In summary, as described, the omnipresent need for security surely affected the way one could live, there

is no doubt of that. It was also especially unwelcome for one who dislikes guns as I do and literally hated to see my children practice donning their gas masks.

Q: Isn't it true that Bolivia has had a violent past?

SIRACUSA: Yes. That has been the case throughout its history and the situation when I was there was very volatile and no exception. There was extreme radicalism in the government itself and the University was a locus of Marxist teaching, of indoctrination and training for terrorists acts, and of shrill and constant anti-Americanism. Night after night bombs would explode in various places, often—but not always—for the purpose of intimidation rather than for destruction of a particular target. And from the University, only a few blocks from where we lived, there would be almost nightly bursts of random rifle and machine gun firing, apparently just for the hell of it. But one could not always be sure and noise not only interrupted sleep but could be quite disconcerting as well.

One night, early on, during as especially scary occupancy with bombs in the plaza across the street from our residence, I saw the Bolivian gate guards running away and leaving us without any protection if needed. Thereafter we posted a Marine Guard at the Residence over night so we could have at least one person fully reliable. The Marine house was about three or four blocks away and could provide quick backup if need should arise.

While reassuring this did not prove infallible—one night, a jumpy marine just back from Vietnam, fell asleep at this post and did not awaken when our burglar alarm system went off or when I called to him to check on the reason. But he awakened just as I approached his post to investigate and, startled, grabbed his 45 automatic which was on the couch beside him. Fortunately, he recognized me in time to avoid a disaster (to me)—but his career as an Embassy Guard came to an abrupt end.

And to illustrate that there were tragic bombings as well as noise making ones: Assistant Secretary Myers came to La Paz and the anti-American press outcry and student blocking of the road down to La Paz forced us to use a circuitous route, many miles longer, to

approach the inner city from the so called “valley of the moon” far below. While we succeeding in thwarting student plans, Myers was still in for some classic Bolivian reality.

The next morning as we were having breakfast, preparatory to calling on President Ovando, a single, loud bomb was heard to detonate very nearby. A few minutes later we learned that a neighbor (publisher of a prominent La Paz newspaper and the only one with any semblance of independence and courage) had been killed together with his wife. A well dressed chauffeur had given their butler a nicely wrapped “birthday gift” which exploded as he and his wife, breakfasting in bed, started to unwrap it. A few minutes later, when Charlie Myers and I called on the President, whose residence was also in the immediate vicinity, we could not help but wonder as he impassively expressed his sorrow over the tragedy.

A further comment on the challenges of my early days in La Paz which bears on the question of security and diplomatic atmosphere. I had not been there a month when the nightly television news program—at 9 PM over the only and government-owned station —which began with panoramic shot of the city, far below the stations locale near the airport, started to zoom onto one of the MUERA CIACUSA signs before starting the news. This held for about 20 seconds and immediately became the talk of the town and was intolerable to me—the last straw, so to speak.

Without asking or receiving any instruction from the Department I let it go for several days to be sure it was not an accident and then demanded an audience with the President, which was promptly granted. Without wasting many words on niceties I firmly but politely told Ovando that he would have to decide whether he wanted an American Ambassador in La Paz or not. I said that the attitude shown by the official TV station could quickly render ineffective any efforts by me to promote good relations and that Bolivia should know that my President could not send anyone else who could not be dealt with in the same way. So I asked for his answer. Did he or did he not want an American Ambassador in La Paz?

The President was silent for a moment while he contemplated me, chomping his teeth or gums in their absence as he had a habit of doing. He then picked up the phone and dialed the Minister of the Interior (incidentally, the only one friendly to the US at the time) and told him in my presence to see to it that the sequence was stopped. I thanked the President for his action and reiterated my desire to promote good relations with Bolivia which I would try to do if given the chance. That night and thereafter the panoramic zoom focus on the graffiti was not seen again, but the graffiti took a long time to fade.

To return to a more general account, during my nearly four years in Bolivia we had not only the Gulf case to deal with but several other expropriations as well. There was the case of the Mina Matilda silver/lead mine owned by U.S. Steel, and that of the International Metals Processing Company, IMPC, which had a specialized process for recovering and refining tin from old mine tailings. This case had the additional complication of financing by the OPIC, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, a US Government agency. Finally, there was the case of our Binational Center in La Paz which had been invaded by the University students whom the government lacked the courage to eject.

Without going into details I can say with some satisfaction that before I left Bolivia each and everyone of these cases had been settled with “prompt, adequate and effective” compensation; this in spite of the volatility of the period with frequent coups and changes of government. (in fact, on one memorable day, Bolivia actually had six presidents.)

While a lot of people and interests were involved in the negotiations, the Embassy did help to provide good offices and action to keep the talks alive. It is also to the credit of Bolivia (unlike Peru) that it recognized its responsibility under international law and negotiated responsibly, however reluctantly. US policy, as is well known, fully recognizes the sovereign right of expropriation, but it correspondingly insists on the obligation to make fair compensation.

I might note here that I actually encouraged the expropriation of our binational center. After our appeals to the Foreign Office for return of our property was fruitless (the government had no stomach for kicking the students out and denying them their “victory” over the U.S.) I called on the President (Torres at that time) and suggested that if the students could not be dislodged then the government should formally expropriate the property and pay compensation. He thought this a good idea and a relief for him so eventually we agreed to trade our property for a much more suitable and better located one in the center of the city, several blocks from the Chancery. I had never liked the location of our traditional center in any case since it was just across the street from the University and thus a constant target for harassment or worse.

Incidentally, in connection with the unrest leading to the occupation of this binational center, (during other periods of unrest others had been sacked) the students also were able to steal one of our Embassy carryalls which they presented to the Rector for his personal transportation. Our protests and demands were of no avail, even when we told the Foreign Office who had the car, but the surprising outcome was very satisfying.

Several weeks later, two of our chauffeurs happened to see the car at a service station where it had just been washed. Seeing the keys in it they commandeered it and returned to the Embassy in triumph for which they were praised and appropriately rewarded. However, the real satisfaction was yet to come.

Later that afternoon a messenger delivered a most flowery letter to me from the Rector, pleading for the return of the vehicle and making the case that the Ambassador must surely understand the great difficulty which this incident caused for his relations with the student body, and so on and so forth, with mighty praise for the Ambassador's well-known goodwill, tact and diplomacy. (This from one of the most vitriolic Yankee-haters one can imagine who presided over a school for terrorism rather than a university in any real sense).

I need not describe the great satisfaction I had in drafting my reply which while professing full sympathy for the Rector's plight nonetheless blamed my inability to comply on the rigidities of U.S. Government regulations. I did offer hope, however, by saying that when the carryall had served its appropriate time it would be offered for sale on a bidding basis in which the Rector as anyone else could participate, and we would be sure to let him know when the time came. I did not receive a reply.

The Ovando administration did not last very long. He was under constant pressure by his leftist people to do more and more extreme things and finally the military were not going to take it anymore. There was a general named Miranda who was then chief of the armed forces. General Miranda announced a coup from the city of Santa Cruz, several hours by air from La Paz. One of the most interesting political times I have ever experienced happened then as Miranda's challenge split the military forces in the capital. So, as he progressed from city to city on his return to La Paz, making frequent announcements and pronouncements, the tension mounted as varying factions jockeyed for position and advantage. But none, it seemed, were disposed to support Ovando.

My wife and one daughter were in Peru at the time. My youngest daughter was with me and I was very concerned about her welfare should there be fighting as almost any unrest for whatever motive seemed to provide excuse for someone to attack the American Embassy or its property. So I asked my friends, the Ecuadorian Ambassador and his wife, if they would take Kristin into their house. I always kid Crissy today that I put her in asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy. I felt very much better that she was in a place not so targeted as we frequently were.

But back to the coup. The next morning, about six o'clock, Ovando read his tea leaves and decided that the jig was up. So he fled his house and took asylum in the Mexican Ambassador's residence, just across the plaza from my own.

Upon arrival in La Paz that morning General Miranda went to the major military cartel and from there proclaimed himself President. By noon, however, realizing he did not have full support, and to avoid a fight, he withdrew in favor of an agreed upon triumvirate made up of the Chief of the Air Force, General Satori, the Commander of the Navy, Admiral Albaracin. And an Army General whose name I forget. Later in the afternoon there was a ceremony in front of the Presidential Palace to install the three, complete with oaths, sashes and speeches. Alas, this lash-up did not survive the sunset.

While the ceremony was in progress, another prominent general, J.J. Torres (recently forced out of his post as Chief of the Armed Forces for some scandalous excesses, and replaced by Miranda) was on his way to El Alto airport hoping to commandeer a plane to flee the country. While he was there negotiating for transport he was joined by the newly anointed 1/3-president, General Satori, and together they cooked up the scheme to denounce the triumvirate and install Torres as President with air force backing.

Thereupon a flight of venerable Mustang fighter planes was dispatched to overfly the capital with satisfying swoops and the firing of rockets harmlessly into the darkening sky. Simultaneously the air force took over the TV transmitters nearby and passed the news of the new President, the sixth for the day. There was no counter move from the Army where Torres had some support, especially with air force backing assured, and good old Admiral Albaracin went down bubbling, so to speak, his Navy having neither the wherewithal nor the will to resist the trend of affairs.

So that remarkable day passed into history, six presidents in one day, ending with Torres triumphal return to the palace for his own oath-taking, complete with sash and speech. Given his escapist intent but a few hours before, no one could have been more surprised than Torres with such an outcome. I was later given to understand that my reports on this eventful day, presidential musical chairs, had helped lighten the day for then NSC chief Kissinger and for President Nixon as well. Torres, incidentally, had previously commanded the forces which captured and then killed Che Guevara. Also, during his relatively brief

stint as President, he presided over a regime which nearly made Bolivia another Cuba. In the long run, years after his ouster, he was murdered in Buenos Aires in a crime which, I believe, was never solved.

Usually when there was unrest from almost any cause it provided excuse for someone to attack some American installation. On this day our Marine house, near the University, was invaded and sacked by a gang of students and much of the Marines personal effects and gear was stolen. The three Marines in the house at the time followed their strict training and made no effort at armed defense, which would have provoked a worse crisis had any student been killed or injured.

But among the items stolen was the base radio, a relatively sophisticated one, used for communication with the Chancery, radio equipped cars, residences, etc. Some weeks later, after Embassy notes demanding restitution of property and damages had been ignored, one of our Military Group officers working in the Ministry of Defense discovered the radio in the office of the Minister. He had received it, he said, as a gift from the students and pretended no idea of its origin. Such, sometimes, is Bolivia.

Perhaps this account can give some insight into what service in Bolivia can be like and why all US personnel who have served there term themselves, in a comradely way, SOBs, survivors of Bolivia meaning both altitude and atmosphere. But almost to a man they have a genuine fondness for the place because of its spectacular scenic beauty and the appealing charm and mystery of the Aymara and Quechua Indians and their way of life. No one can have a harder life—yet none are more ready to have a fiesta with costumes, booze and band for interminable dancing. Perhaps the mild narcotic effect of the coca leaf and lime helps endure what must be endured.

Q: It sounds like a comic opera, but I am sure there was a lot of serious business in terms of the terrorist threat. These were the leftists in the hill? Who were these people?

SIRACUSA: So it may sound, but it was serious and all too real.The principal terrorist organization was called the ELN Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional) Army of National Liberation. But, although vociferous and even dangerous, and adept at the tactics and instruments of intimidation, the ELN was never large in numbers nor did it have popular support to any significant degree. Its emotional, idealistic backing came from the Marxist-dominated universities and the students so inspired. The logical target, supposedly to blame for all of Bolivia's miseries, (the three “Tin Barons” having long since been eliminated by confiscation) was, of course, the United States.

Apart from these radical agitators, Bolivians in general were hardworking, decent people with heavy burdens to bear (not the least being the political volatility of their land and its of penchant for violence) and I did not believe them to broadly disposed against the United States and Americans.

As for violence, there was one memorable spot on the road to Yungas Norte where large blocks of granite were to be seen beside the road. They had been there for years, intended to form a monument - unfinished - to seven men hurled alive into the abyss in an act of “political” retaliation. Also, on the road to Oruro, there was a similar finished monument of six or seven iron crosses marking the spot of a similar political execution.

Finally, Bolivians all remember the fate of President Villaroel who, in the late 40's or very early 50, had been dragged from his office at the Moneda palace and hanged to the lamp-post at the doorway. The lamp-post remains as a grim reminder known to all of this event. In the more remote past the same plaza had been the site of various political executions.

There was also the strongly unionized, very active miners under their colorful, leftist leader, Juan Lechin Oquendo. When the miners demonstrated in support of a cause they all carried bandoleers of dynamite which they surely knew how to use and would set off a few sticks just to let it be known what they could do if they wished. Their presence on

such occasions caused much uneasiness and even fear among the populace, aware of the potential, and people stayed off the streets..

At the bottom of the heap but most in numbers was the Indian peasantry, benefited somewhat by land reform accompanying the 1954 MNR Revolution led by Victor Paz Estenssoro) which most prominently expropriated the great tin mines. For the most part these people simply wanted to be left alone and were not a political factor, even though the ELN in its not very effective guerrilla efforts sought to enlist them, but failed, as had Che Guevara.

The University in La Paz and on all campuses was extremely leftist, Marxist-influenced and supported the ELN's tactics of intimidation. In La Paz, for example, the University was located on the single road going down from central city to the residential suburbs 1500 feet below. From this strategic location the students could and did command the road, often impeding traffic at minimum or when so inspired overturning and burning cars. Because of the traditional Latin American immunity Fuero Universitario) they could perform such acts and then retreat to the adjacent campus with no disciplinary consequence. And none were to be expected there where professors and even the Rector might be the instigators.

One night they intercepted two of our Embassy carryalls which inopportunely happened by and burned them on the spot. Happily, drivers and passengers escaped unharmed and, of course, Embassy notes demanding restitution went into the “slow man” pile which was the fate of most of them.

More directly related to ELN activity, a large group of students left the university one Sunday afternoon in trucks festooned with banners proclaiming support for a literacy program to be held in the Jungas, the upper Amazon regions. Ironically, this program was sponsored by USAID which was virtually without contact in the university and hoped with such a noncontroversial, beneficial program to establish some useful ties with students.

However, instead of literacy materials, the trucks carried weapons of all kinds and students bound on starting an anti-government guerrilla campaign with ELN sponsorship. Tragically, this ill-fated enterprise, doubtless advocated by their ELN-conniving professors, was put down by the military after some fighting and very much suffering by the poorly prepared students who had been sucked into it by their idealistic fervor, . They had neither training nor equipment to endure much less fight in the jungle and many were killed or died of other causes.

One victim of the affair was President Ovando's son who was taken without authorization by a fighter pilot for a view of the “war zone”. Returning, they crashed into Lake Titicaca as the pilot was thrilling the youngster with a demonstration of low-level aerobatics. If being a President in Bolivia can be risky, apparently so can being a President's son. About two years after the death of Ovando's son, then President Banzer's oldest son also died. In this case, however, he and a friend were at home playing with an automatic pistol, with tragic results to young Banzer.

In connection with the ELN guerrilla incident I might insert here the story of Jenny Koeller, a Marxist student activist and leader who had left La Paz and established herself in Cochabamba with her Chilean husband. Once when I visited Cochabamba to host a reception at our binational center I was surprised that the avowedly communist Rector of the University there attended; that in spite of rowdy and vociferous parades and demonstrations against my presence in the city, Ms. Koeller having much to do with this. Maybe the Rector was lured by a taste for good Scotch but we did have a very civil if wary interchange.

Some time later, when Ms. Koeller and her husband were found murdered, dire charges were made that I, the Embassy and the CIA, had been the perpetrators. The press had a field day with this story which we ignored except prudently to increase our own security. Later, and in a rare occurrence, the real story came out. It was contained in a long, wordy ELN “MANIFESTO” issued to kickoff the ill-fated guerrilla campaign mentioned above.

Surprisingly, this document carried the admission that the ELN itself had dispatched Jenny and her husband as punishment for some deviationist activity which allegedly caste suspicion on them. Presumably the admission was intended as warning to the students not to defect or they might meet the same fate.

So my name was cleared of this charge which was a relief. However, I'm sure it was not expunged from the morgue files of the media agencies which thrived on such stuff and presumably remains to this day as part of my “dossier”.

I finally felt it wise to send my family home in June, 1971 when my eldest daughter would be graduated from high school. By that time, this was during the increasingly radical Torres regime and at a moment when the Embassy felt his days were numbered. We had had many attacks on American installations, two more expropriations after that of Gulf, and the seizing and destroying of our cultural institutes around the country.

Also there had been terrorists threats against my children. One day their guards, being advised by my wife of someone in the adjacent Plaza Abaroa suspiciously observing their activities, moved in to apprehend him. As they grabbed him he was rapidly swallowing notes he had been taking. It turned out that my youngest daughter was being targeted for kidnapping and who knows what. The “spy” it developed was affiliated with an ELN leader in the village of Sorata, below the great mountain Illampu.

So as soon as my daughter was graduated from high school my family departed with me planning to join them on home leave later in the summer. Since my daughter was to start university, my wife planned to stay on at least for a while to take some courses herself, and my youngest daughter would go to school there as well. So they left and it proved to be timely.

Shortly thereafter we discovered that Torres' Minister of Government was a secret member of the ELN. Well, this was crucial intelligence as our guards were all Bolivians taken from the Bolivian police force, seconded to the Embassy. We paid and trained them and, of

course, they lived in intimate proximity with us. To discover that their ultimate boss in the Bolivian hierarchy had terrorist connections was disconcerting to say the least.

Based on this information the Department of State sent a contingent of four specially trained Marines to serve as my PSU or Personal Security Unit. Since they were to bear arms and accompany me, thus operating beyond the chancery where Marine guards traditionally work, we had to obtain special permission for them from the government, which I did, directly with the President.

Thereafter, one or more of these guards was constantly with me, in addition to the regular Bolivian guards and chauffeurs. I understood at the time that I was the only Ambassador apart from Ellsworth Bunker in Saigon who had such a unit of guards. In my case, this lasted until Torres was thrown out about two months later and things changed drastically for the better, for us as well as for Bolivia and Bolivians in general. A few weeks after Banzer came into power we were able with confidence to send this PSU unit home.

About the same time the PSU came for me we felt we had to expand protection for all our personnel and arranged to have night guards outside the homes of those living in residential areas. This was not much but we thought better than nothing and hoped for the best. One night of general noise-making bombing around the city a quite powerful bomb was exploded against the wall surrounding the home of one of our senior officers and blew out the windows along that side of the house. Fortunately, security instructions were practiced there and closed blinds and heavy drapes protected the family, with four daughters, from any injury. Later when the officer asked the guard for information he had seen nothing. When asked where his weapon was he replied, pathetically, that he did not have one, but he did say he had a bullet which he displayed between two fingers!!! So much for protection.

As we viewed Torres, especially toward the end of his Presidency, he seemed to be in a sort of suspended animation with little or no visible means of support. There was clear

evidence of unrest as elements of the military began to turn against him, alarmed by his increasingly radical measures. It seemed clear to us that he would not last much longer, and we so reported, although we could not say exactly when it would happen. Also, while he had apparent support from the unions, the university, and much of the media, they all seemed to have separate and not always compatible agendas and sought to use him for their own purposes alone. All of these, for different reasons supported him, and exploited him, one against the other. Not a very promising formula for stability.

The Embassy reported that it was just a matter of time when a new chapter would be written. Our recommendation to Washington was to pursue our interests as best we could, keep our heads down and be patient as internal Bolivian forces appeared to be moving toward a change. The worst thing we could do, we said, was to do anything which might make us appear to be participants in Torres' certain ouster. Meanwhile, the Gulf case having been settled, we would do what we could to further talks on the two mining expropriations and the newly captured binational center in La Paz which was the subject of several meetings I had with Torres.

President Nixon, about this time, made a decision crucial, we thought, to our interests, almost akin to the one in which I participated in regard to Peru. In the early spring of 1971 there was strong support in Washington for making a rather massive sale of tin from American stockpiles as a budget supporting measure. But to the extent this might affect the price of tin on world markets it could be devastating to Bolivia. And, regardless of the actual impact, it would have been blasted in Bolivia as an unfriendly act aimed at them. That, in turn, could have clear security implications and would also affect adversely our various negotiations in progress.

Out of such concerns I went to Washington in May of 1971 and, in a meeting with the President, strongly argued against the sale at that time as being harmful to our interests in Bolivia. Some of my arguments were the same I had used in Coral Gables to advise against punitive measures against Peru. I found President Nixon to be very interested in

Bolivia and well informed on Latin America in general. Although General Haig, who met me, said I was really having a photo opportunity of about 5 minutes, the President kept me for more than an hour. The President himself signaled the end when he finally gave me the usual gifts, autographed golf ball and cuff-links, and summoned the photographers.

Later I had a hard time reconciling the image of the President I had known, then and at Coral Gables before — poised, formal, articulate and careful of language — with the sort of bowery bum image and language which emerged with the Watergate tapes. But I must admit that if I, as Ambassador, was always careful of my poise and image, publicly and privately, there were plenty of times when, surrounded by my closest advisors, I could let my hair down and use very pithy language as well. Letting off steam privately, I believe, is an aid in promoting a calm and level-headed decision-making process. So I could feel more understanding of the President as I in some amazement read the tapes.(.later some Embassy wag had tagged the picture in my office of this meeting with the words “being bugged”)

A small illustration of President Nixon's interest in Latin America came to my attention when I received a letter from him dated April 6, 1971, complimenting me for a speech I had made before the Bolivia-North American Business Council on February 16 of that year. Frustrated and fed up with the unrelenting attacks made against me and the U.S., I decided to attack the problem head-on, come what may. So, in spirited defense of the contributions which had been made in Latin America in general, and in Bolivia specifically, by American private investment and government aid programs, I contrasted these benefits with the attacks of “el Imperialismo Yanquis” so commonly tossed about. I suppose it was this which came to the attention of the President or, at least of one of his advisors, knowing his keen interests, and who doubtless drafted the letter. However, it was nice to receive it.

The reaction was interesting and, on the whole, I think, beneficial. Expected quarters were outraged but their attacks shallow and unoriginal. But others had a more thoughtful

reaction and words of encouragement were received from many quarters, even some unexpected within the government.

Encouraged, we decided to maintain the offensive and so prepared for wide distribution a pamphlet entitled “EL IMPERIALISMO YANQUI.” This, under an attractive red, white and blue cover consisted, only of page after page of photographs of completed U.S. projects, with some indication of costs and benefits, all under the repeated title on each page, “El Imperialismo Yanqui.” This was very satisfying, sort of “in your face” as one might say today. My able staff and I were very pleased and confident in what we had done. For once, the detractors had little to say as the case was quite clear.

But, back to the tin problem. At that time Bolivia had in Washington a young, American-educated Ambassador, Tony Sanches de Lozada, who while seemingly incompatible with the Torres regime, nonetheless represented it. Most of us considered Sanches de Lozada to be a friend and his brother in Bolivia, tending the family mining interests, not to be a supporter of Torres. In any case, Tony also got to see the President and if there was any issue he could argue with passion and conviction it would be this one. Whether our two efforts influenced the President we do not know but, happily we thought, and to the surprise and doubtless chagrin of many who thought the sale a forgone conclusion, he decided against sales at that time. We breathed a big sigh of relief.

I left for my home leave in late July of 1971 and my family already being in California) decided as a means of pressure relief to do something totally different for a while, all alone and above all without guards surrounding me: nothing can be more oppressive than never to make a move without guards. I wanted to buy a motorcycle and for three weeks take a tour through Nova Scotia. The Department was not much taken with this plan as they wanted me more closely in touch, the situation being tenuous as it was in Bolivia. However, with my consultation finished and my promise to call in every day, I flew to Boston where I bought my bike and took off for a memorable, relaxing journey, first to Martha's Vineyard and then to Nova Scotia.

On my way back two weeks later, having put 3000 miles on my bike, I awakened in a Boston motel to the TV news of a revolution in Bolivia. So I sold my bike back to the Agency I bought it from and flew to Washington. At two o'clock the next morning I was on a special military flight to Miami to join with a delayed Braniff flight and thence back to La Paz for whatever awaited.

By the time I arrived the contest was almost all over and a new president was in command.

Q: He was not a military person?

SIRACUSA: Yes he was. Hugo Banzer was a military officer and, I thought then, a remarkable one for Latin America. I had been told by the Bolivian Ambassador in Washington when I went there first to keep an eye on Banzer, then a colonel commanding the military school. In that capacity I came to know him quite well and to see in him a man of courage and principle. In fact, he had been fired over a matter of principle, a speech to students including some daring political criticism of attitudes of the regime, and more pointedly of the Army command.. As I recall, the firing officer was General Torres, then Commander in Chief of the Army, who now, Banzer had deposed.

Torres, under the influence of the various interests supporting or exploiting him to their own ends, but none really loyal to him, had been doing alarming things such as establishing “peoples courts” and “peoples assemblies” much, many thought, in the example of Cuba. In fact, many thought Bolivia under Torres was on the verge of becoming another Cuba, but this one in the heart of South America. And, the Soviet diplomatic presence was growing rapidly, another reason for concern.

Another thing Torres had done which did not help our relations was to expel the entire Peace Corps from Bolivia. It seems that the ability of our volunteers to go anywhere in the country and work peacefully with the Indians and other common people projected an

image intolerable to Torres' more extreme supporters who tried to cast us in an entirely different image. Some of their charges were outlandish in the extreme—such as that they were sterilizing the Indians in a secret genocide program or, that oils secretly rendered from Indian corpses was vital for intercontinental missiles!!!.

Some of this was doubtless inspired by a widely circulated but vicious propaganda film called YAWAR MALLCU (”The Blood of the Condor”) which denounced “Yankee imperialism” with emphasis on the Peace Corps.

In any case, on trumped up charges of Peace Corps espionage, I was summoned to the Foreign Office and handed a formal demand that all Peace Corps activity cease forthwith and that all volunteers must leave the country. After vigorous protest and total denial of all charges-which we publicized as best we could in an intimidated press-we had no option but to comply and did so as quickly as possible as we feared that the charges, highly publicized by the government, could place the volunteers in jeopardy. Within less than two weeks they were all gone and I made it a point to go to the airport to shake the hand of every volunteer who left. So this program, which reached to the lowest of the low, bringing some help, comfort and support, was ended with the real losers being those whom the Corps had been helping.

To illustrate how we never knew just where a threat might be coming from I should mention the case of Mary Harding which came to the fore several months after Banzer came to power. A former Maryknoll Nun, Mary Harding had left the order and was working at least part-time for our binational center when she was arrested on charges of being a member of the ELN. The Embassy immediately established contact with her through our Consul with intent to see to it that she was fairly and lawfully treated. However, she proved hostile to such visits and said she wanted no contact with the Embassy. Nevertheless, she was visited regularly by the Consul who was satisfied that she was in no way mistreated.

Also, I personally had spoken both to Banzer and the Minister of Government about her, warning of the potential sensitivity of this case and urging that they proceed with extreme care. I feared that Catholic organizations would rally to her support, notwithstanding her having left the Order and regardless of the charges lodged against her.

About three weeks later, when I was in California picking up on my interrupted home leave this sensitivity was most clearly illustrated. I received a phone call from Senator Kennedy's office demanding to know why I was in the United States while “Mary Harding was in jail”. I assured the caller that Ms. Harding was being given every protection due her and that she was being visited regularly by our Consul even though she had rejected Embassy help. For her to receive full protection of the Embassy did not depend on my being there but I said that upon my return I would follow the matter closely. I might also have said that while I could appreciate the Senator's concern, I did not feel criticism of my absence on leave, just because one American was in jail, and when an entire Embassy was there and competently affording due protection to her was in any way justified. There was no follow-up call.

Upon my return I again told the President and the Minister of Government how sensitive this matter had become and urged them to resolve it as soon as possible, preferably by deporting her if they considered her guilty rather than having a trial where, if convicted, she might be sentenced to prison. In short, I said, this was clearly a no-win situation for Bolivia, regardless. and that Bolivia would have no peace as long as she remained in a Bolivian jail. So far as I knew, she had not been accused of any specific act or crime except that of association with a terrorist group.

About this time I was visited by a Maryknoll priest who said he was authorized to do whatever it took to get Mary Harding's release and that money was no object—by this I assumed he meant for legal fees or homeward transportation if deported. Almost at the same time I received a visit from the Mother Superior of the Maryknoll Order who had come from New York ostensibly for some Order matter in Cochabamba but also, I

suspect, because of Mary Harding as well. In our meeting I told her that I thought her visit opportune as it gave me another angle for seeking a solution, possibly even to arrange for her to escort Ms. Harding from Bolivia.

The reaction of the Minister of Government was that he wished to personally conducted one last interrogation of Ms. Harding and that thereafter, regardless of result, he would turn her over to me for insuring her deportation which I could arrange in company of the Mother Superior. At that point it was my plan to have her brought to my residence where she could stay in my custody until departure on the Sunday evening flight, the final interrogation to occur on Saturday. I so informed the Mother Superior and invited her to return to La Paz as my guest to be with Ms. Harding until her departure. Also, my wife was not in Bolivia at the time.

Ms. Harding disrupted this plan, however, as she refused after the final questioning, to accept my invitation, saying she would rather stay in jail—and so it was. Actually, I was relieved as I feared a possible security problem should the ELN, assuming she had done something to buy her freedom, might attempt a reprisal. In any case, the next evening, a caravan of Embassy cars, with lead and follow cars and guards, and the American Consul, picked up Ms. Harding at the Ministry and whisked her to the airport for direct loading aboard a waiting Braniff plane, the Mother Superior already being aboard. And she was safely off to home, much to our relief.

However, once home, she was picked up by various activist groups and began to make charges against Bolivia for abuse and against the Embassy for its lack of protection, which seemed ungrateful as we could not have done more for her and were satisfied that she received all her rights and was never abused while in custody. I doubt any Bolivian Ambassador could have arranged such a solution for a Bolivian under similar charges in this the United States.

I often wondered about what could have happened to someone with the selfless vocation she once had becoming so disillusioned as she worked among the impoverished Indians to cause her to resign and embrace a group practicing terrorism, as she wasaccused of doing. But many others joined in the so-called “theology of revolution” and some Orders, if not becoming activists, were known nonetheless to provide sanctuary for sought after individuals, even accused terrorists, and often safe storage for weapons.

If Mary Harding were indeed affiliated with the ELN, which was never proved at trial as there was none nor, I believe, did she ever admit it, one wonders what her targets might have been. She was, after all, working for one of our centers and the night before her arrest had been a guest at my house at a reception given for Bolivian and American workers at the Centers.

To return to the narrative in reaction to Torres' excesses, and with some feeling of alarm, business, mining and commercial interests, and factions in the military, joined with leaders of the principal political parties, the FSB (Federacion Socialista Bolviana), actually the most conservative party despite the name, and the MNR Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario) Victor Paz Estenssoro's old revolutionary party, to engineer Torres' ouster, calling upon Banzer to lead. Thus was formed the unusual coalition and there was no real fight as Torres had no adequate military support and no cohesive non-military political base. General Banzer, then in exile but enjoying popularity both civilian and military) returned to lead the revolt against Torres.

Although conflict was minimal, there was bloodshed. At a meeting of FSB adherents in Santa Cruz, called to celebrate Torres' ouster and to plan for FSB participation in the new regime, a bomb was somehow placed, apparently in a satchel, under the conference table. The explosion was devastating, killing some and maiming others. The sister, or sister-in-law I can't remember which) of Mario Guttierez-Guttierez, later to become Foreign Minister

under Banzer, had one or both legs blown off but did survive. Later we helped send her to the US for specialized treatment.

As usual, however, there was the inevitable attack on an American installation, this time, again, the Marine House in its new location away from the University neighborhood. And this time it was an armed attack, which sprayed the house with automatic weapons fire, causing considerable damage. But there was no attempt to enter, possibly because several marines were there and in these circumstances would have been justified, having been fired upon, in using weapons for self defense. Fortunately this was not necessary as the attackers only hit and ran. The Marine Gunny Sergeant, who fortunately was in the house and coolly in command, was the only casualty, being wounded slightly by flying glass and plaster.

I arrived in La Paz early in the morning two days after Banzer had been proclaimed President, just in time to witness a brief uprising in the university. Banzer possibly with more bravado and courage than judgement, planned to walk to the University to reason with the students and seek their cooperation. However, being met with gunfire as he approached, he returned to the Palace and ordered a disciplinary air strike.

About an hour later two Mustangs released a couple of rockets into the University tower and that settled the matter with the government then “intervening” the institution as an extreme measure (violating university immunity) to try to make it a school again and not a haven for terrorist indoctrination and training. Just arrived in La Paz from my interrupted home leave, I observed the air strike from a back office of the chancery about half a mile away.

I believe that Juan Lechin Oquendo, the colorful, celebrated and perennial leader of the Miners Unions, having some fear because of his support for Torres, is said to have escaped to Peru concealed in a coffin. Coincidentally, Victor Paz Estenssoro, leader of the 1954 revolt ousting the tin barons, Patino, Aramayo and Hochschild, returned from exile in

Peru to take his previously agreed role as leader of the “loyal opposition”. He later exiled himself again to Washington where I last saw him four years later pushing a cart through the Safeway near the Department of State.

Most of the young extremists of the Torres regime managed to flee, many apparently going to Uruguay, Chile, Mexico and other countries hospitable to people of their political bent. And Torres, from embassy asylum, went to Argentina where he was mysteriously murdered some years later, a mystery insofar as I know which was never solved. Hearing this while in Uruguay, I was very sad for Torres. Even though I had suffered much strain and anguish during Torres' regime I never held him responsible. I always found him to be a decent person to deal with and on a personal basis he treated me well. On one memorable occasion he accepted my invitation to a unique occasion, a symphony in La Paz by the Utah symphony, Under the baton of their celebrated conductor, Maurice Abravanal, a truly delightful personality.

I know Torres and his wife were emotionally impressed when the program started, to the surprise of all, with a stirring rendition of Bolivia's national anthem, followed by the Star Spangled Banner. Never had Bolivians heard their anthem performed by an entire symphony such as this one.

Arriving just a couple of hours before the performance, Maestro Abravanal was resting when my request to have this done if possible, was conveyed to his concert master who had responded that they did not have the music. However, as the Maestro told me at my residence after the performance. he had said, when informed of my request on awakening, that it would be done, In about a half hour, with the help of our cultural officers a score was provided and enough paper prepared for the orchestra to work from. The maestro for his part listened to a recording and committed it to memory. The one and only time they played it was truly beautiful-but real professionals are really professional, as so they proved to be.

But to return to the Banzer era, for our part, my staff and I saw this unusually broad-based coalition of forces and capable leadership as providing a singular opportunity to turn things around in Bolivia to their benefit as well as to our own. The tie which bound these diverse forces was a common reaction against the Torres regime's extremism. And if some degree of moderation was the opposite of extremism, that, we thought was what Bolivia sorely needed. We therefore, once the new regime gave the required assurances of respect for international agreements, and was seen actually to be in charge, we recommended its prompt recognition, which was accorded. Then, in my first meeting with Banzer, I listened to his appeal for help in what he called his desire to build a new Bolivia on basis of the unprecedentedly broad political coalition with then supported him. The sooner the coalition could see some success and internal improvement, the more likely it was, in Banzers's view to stay together.

Thereafter, the Embassy recommended a strong assistance program aimed at quickly creating jobs and restoring optimism in a country which had known so little and had been experiencing very hard times. But it took persuasion to get approval of what we wanted as there was strong opposition in the leadership of USAID for Latin America at the time, even though the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, Charles Myers, supported the Embassy's plan. A near impasse was broken, however by the timely personal intervention of Henry Kissinger (then still at the NSC) who, I was later told, intervened to say “give the Ambassador what he wants”. This quickly resulted in instructions for me to offer Banzer an initial $10 million emergency tranche, with more to follow in a program to be developed jointly, and with the help of a special team from Washington.

Such was my personal insight into the strange relationship between Kissinger at the NSC and the Department. As beneficiary of a decision favoring what I thought we should do, it enabled us promptly to seize the moment and cut through red tape. So I was pleased and I believe the decision clearly served our interests, as the results showed.

However, if such power to override the norms of decision making got behind a bad policy or recommendation it could be damaging as well.

In conveying or decision to Banzer, I laid down the strict condition that pursuit of the program would depend on the government's respect for individual rights and that harsh treatment of political adversaries would immediately change our attitude toward him and his government. I believe, on the whole, that Banzer's government respected this condition then and for some time to come. At the same time, since most of the young, hothead extremists and terrorists had escaped to friendlier climes, there was not that much target for repression, at least at first any for as long as I was there.

From that moment Bolivia started on almost a decade of unprecedented progress. There was a building boom in housing, offices and hotels. Several unsightly steel skeletons of buildings long-abandoned in downtown La Paz were soon completed and inflation, always a plague, was brought under reasonable control. When I left Bolivia two years later I could see much of this already happening and so could leave with the satisfaction that Bolivia was a more stable place, that some of our problems had been solved and that US/Bolivian relations were quite good.

We were even getting good cooperation for our expanding anti-drug campaign which featured training and equipping Bolivian forces and several cocaine- burning demonstrations of captured drugs had taken place. However, the dimension this problem achieved in subsequent years, pulled by the insatiable US dollar demand for drugs, was yet to come. The brutality of drug kingpins and the corrupting effects of seemingly limitless funds inevitably took a toll on U.S./Bolivian relations even though cooperation still seems to be extensive.

Once I flew with Banzer in a small Cessna airplane from Copacabana to a site on the Chapare where he was to dedicate part of a road built by USAID. I was sitting in the backseat and as we began our descent to land of the highway, Banzer took his shirt off

and put on a bullet proof vest which had been furnished him by the U.S. Needless to say I felt a little naked as we climbed out of the plane, and I stood near him during all the ceremonies. But nothing happened.

During all my stay in Bolivia we tried to help the country with military “civic action” flights to promote development, this through all the Presidencies. Periodically, when several items of heavy equipment such as bulldozers) and other supplies were accumulated in La Paz we would request a C-130 Lockheed Hercules cargo plane from Panama and transport the needed items to remote areas, usually in the upper Amazon regions. As an amateur pilot I always liked to go on these flights when I could and was usually invited to sit in the co-pilots seat and steer the plane.

Returning to La Paz after one such flight the young captain asked if I would like to land the airplane. I told him he was crazy as my license was only for “single engine land” aircraft. He insisted I would have no problem so as we rounded the great mountain Illimani behind La Paz I throttled back and started down. I believe I made the longest approach ever, going miles away and over Lake Titicaca to establish a very long shallow descent.

As we neared the airport I said I had no experience to judge how high I was but the captain said all was fine and he would tell me when to flair out, raising the nose. We crossed the threshold 13,400 feet high) and going quite fast at that altitude and when he said flair I hauled back on the yoke and we sat down smooth as could be. He reversed the props and braked and that was that—my proudest landing as a pilot.

I was not completely inexperienced as I would frequently steer our old four-engine C-54 which the Military Group had, but never did I try to land it.—one final note of my piloting—years before as we were returning from Brasilia on an official visit (I was then Director of Brazilian Affairs in the Department) Secretary Dulles came looking for me at about 2 AM and was quite puzzled to find me driving the Constellation he used while the pilot semi-dozed. He harumphed a bit but that was all.

It was not too long after the Banzer government came in that Mario Guttierez-Guttierez whom we called MG-squared) took some alarm over an incident with the Soviet Embassy, by that time grown to about 150 people. One wondered what they all did as their apparent programs of technical aid did not seem in any way to warrant so many. In any case, in reaction, Guttierez ordered the summary departure of all of them except for the Ambassador, Shervansky, and about nine more of his choosing.

This caused a notable change in the attitude and demeanor of the Soviets. The Ambassador, whose wife never came to the post, had been rather arrogant, especially while riding high in the Torres regime. Thereafter he became quite subdued and sought a friendlier relation with me, the Papal Nuncio and others. Finally, perhaps because of this and also of the progress by then of d#tente, the Soviet Ambassador offered my wife and me one of our more memorable black tie farewell dinners upon our departure for Uruguay.

In great contrast to my early experience, my last two years in Bolivia were not only satisfying professionally but were highly enjoyable as well. For one thing, after my brief vacation experience, I decided that I liked motorcycling and that Bolivia was ideal for that sport. Besides, the security situation was much improved even though guards were still required. So I bought a new bike and, as the American Ambassador set the example, many others did so as well. Soon my regular companions included the French Ambassador, the head of the Bank of America, some local businessmen, other members of the Embassy and several teachers from our American School.

Riding challenges were spectacular so we could go from out La Paz altitude of 12,500 feet over a pass at 18,500 and then plunge down to the tropical Jungas at around 2000 feet, and back again, all in one day. Eventually I bought smaller motorcycles for my wife and youngest daughter, now returned, who enjoyed the sport as well.

One of the Embassy's programs I like very much was the Alliance for Progress AID program called SPECIAL PROJECTS. Each Embassy was given, in tranches of $50,000,

funds to spend on small projects designed to help people help themselves. In Bolivia this mostly meant work with campesinos or Indian peasants. As I had to approve the awards I asked our Special Projects Officer to tell me whenever an inauguration ceremony might be one I would like to attend. So I frequently did so as it gave me much pleasure and a chance to contact these really colorful people.

One such project involved a grant of $1800 to the people of Huatapampa, a small Indian village on the shores of Lake Titicaca, dominated from across the narrow lake at that point by Bolivia's highest peak, the majestic and always snow capped Illampu at about 23,000 feet. The money was for dynamite and hand tools picks and shovels, mostly) to enable them to build a road down to their village from the highway several hundred feet above which went on to Peru. Without the road there was only a footpath running up through the remnants of old Inca terraces. The men of the village wanted a road so trucks could come to the town and so facilitate the movement of such freight as there was.

With the grant made, in several months, the village men had designed and built the road with no outside engineering help. A big inauguration ceremony was arranged and I was invited to attend as special guest and to honored by a luncheon. For such occasions the special projects officer would always say that the Ambassador likes chicken, thus to be spared something exotic such as a plate with half a sheep's head, complete with eyeball, brain and beard — a special delicacy. I knew the chicken would be hot but I liked that. Anticipating something special this time I took my wife and several Embassy couples along.

We arrived about 9 am after a three hour drive from La Paz and a short ferry ride across the Straits of Tiquina, the narrowest part of the lake which really makes it into two large lakes rather than one. The altitude is 12,500, the same as the city of La Paz. We were met at the head of the new road by the Mayor and other dignitaries, all of the men of the village, and by the colorfully costumed village band. All Bolivian Indian villages, no matter how humble, have a band.

After the formal greetings and abrazos (embraces) in which we were all showered with confetti a typical gesture} we started down the new road, the mayor and I leading the party behind the band, followed by all of the men and then by our three carryalls making an historic first entry of motor vehicles into Huatapampa.

Below we could see all the women and children awaiting in their best fiesta finery; the women, of course, in their brown derby hats, broad skirts over multiple petticoats, and each carrying a silver jug of refreshment. About every hundred yards along the road we passed under a special arch decorated with colorful bayetta cloth and hung with the villages best silver plates, combs, dishes, spoons, etc.(no matter how poor, Indians seems all to possess these treasures) And, as we neared each arch, sticks of dynamite would be exploded in our honor.

It was a grand and unforgettable moment and the chicken for lunch was delicious-though peppery beyond belief. After the speeches I and the Embassy men had to dance the cueca with the Indian ladies, called CHOLLAS, but the men did not ask to dance with our wives. We were also served Peruvian beer and champagne, much to our surprise, although we divined the reason later, as follows:

My wife and I chose to walk up to the highway along the old Inca trail and observing small plantings on some of the terraces we asked the mayor who did that work. The women, he replied. So, when we asked what the men did he said, “we travel”. Thus we divined that the men must be engaged in smuggling by boat from Peru and really wanted the road to facilitate carrying heavy cargoes up to the highway and thus into commerce. That explained the Peruvian champagne. We thought!!!.

This was not to be my last contact with Huatapampa. Always enterprising, the mayor after lunch showed me that their recently built new church, with two bell towers, had but one bell. He asked if another special project could be approved as, he said, one bell was not enough for funerals.

By then I had little resistance to the charm of Huatapampa and its citizens. So I told the mayor that although such a bell would not be possible under the program rules I would consider it a personal honor to have caste an appropriate bell and present it to the village as a gift from me and my family. Also, I said I would do this in memory of my father who had come from a beautiful lake country in the Alps of Italy, Lake Como. The beauty of Huatapampa, I said, reminded me of that place.

So, nearly two months later there was an even grander fiesta at Huatapampa when we returned to install the bell, 80 kilos of bronze inscribed simply with “SIRACUSA 1971”. This time we took our daughters and several Embassy families so our children could see that the writers of hateful graffiti in La Paz did not represent all Bolivians. Being less than two months before the fall of the Torres regime, when we were in perhaps our period of greatest tension, such an experience was meaningful and welcome to us all.

Nearly two years later as I and about 15 of my motorcycle companions were on our way to Carnival at Copacabana, a religious shrine adjacent to the islands where the first Incas are said to have descended from heaven Islands of the moon and of the sun),I noticed, as we passed above Huatapampa, that the whole town was in full fiesta. On impulse, I decided to pay a visit and quickly realized, as we swooped into the town, that the celebrants all men masked as “peppinos” (as was traditional at Carnival) felt some consternation over the sudden appearance of these bike-mounted and helmeted strangers. So I quickly removed my helmet and, when recognized, was overwhelmed with an enthusiastic welcome—abrazos, offers of refreshments and demands that we all dance with the Chollas. After about a half-hour we begged off insistent invitations to stay and went on our way, but the welcome had been truly heartwarming and, I believe, significant.

A word about “Peppinos” is here in order. During Carnival dancing, Bolivian Indian men always wear the same mask, called “peppino,” and further to disguise themselves they

speak when so masked in high falsetto voices. This they did during our visit, and I could only guess at who was talking even though I recognized the mayor as he took the lead.

Incidentally, Monsignor Dante Gravelli, the Papal Nuncio then and my personal candidate for Pope what a wonderful man) told me that there was always a big increase in the birthrate 9 months after Carnival. And when the Chollitas, presenting the babies for baptism, were asked about the father they would respond, “Peppino, Padre”-so Carnival was always a jolly time. What I wonder today would the NOW think of such protected anonymity for the philandering males.

There was to be a final visit to Huatapampa when I went there a couple of months later with President Banzer who had invited me to go along on a visit to several villages on the lake where he was to inaugurate projects. We traveled by hydrofoil speed boat and when we arrived at Huatapampa I could see that Banzer was puzzled by the reception I got which, I'm afraid, may have surpassed his own even though I tried to hang back. Such is my warm memory of that beautiful place and of its sturdy people, a fitting memory of what Bolivia is all about.

Speaking of the color of Bolivia I must assert that there has to be something special about a country where the then President of the Central Bank would disappear from La Paz for about a week at Carnival and go to the mining city of Oruro to don his devil costume, in the high rank of Lucifer, and spend the week parading and dancing, day and night, in the great Diablada Ferroviario or railroaders devil dance team, the largest and best in Bolivia. It is a phenomenon that all males in Oruro, mostly poor miners, invest heavily in their scarily designed, horned helmets and elaborate and expensive, jeweled and embroidered costumes, the least ones costing hundreds of dollars. If young Americans aspire to own a car, young Bolivians of this class aspire to own a devils costume and invest heavily in them. And, there is absolutely no more colorful show on earth, at least in my experience, than the “Entrada” at Oruro and the week-long festivities.

Bolivians also have many more charming customs, unique to them, such as the annual Christmas visitation of costumed children Villiancicos, singing for sweets. Their visit to the American Ambassador's residence just two weeks after my children had arrived and amid all the bad press and graffiti helped to show us all, and especially our children, that there was another side to Bolivia, or at least to Bolivians as a people. And then there is the dance of the Doctorcitos, people dressed as little old men with formal attire, tails and top-hat, and with cane, more or less feebly dancing in a bent-legged rheumatic sort of way. Hard to describe but utterly charming. This dance and costume was developed as an Indian burlesque of their Spanish conquerors.

And lastly there is the festival of the Alacitas, uniquely Bolivian, where all the markets are laden with tiny miniatures of all familiar articles, food, drink, costume, tools, house, animals, etc. etc. The idea is that you buy in miniature whatever you might want and in the coming year it will be yours; a poignant fantasy but perhaps a useful one for those who have so little. And the crowning figure of Alacitas is the Ekeiko, the figure of an Indian laden with all the things one might wish. This can be had in ceramic or in fine silver and trading, buying and celebration, with band, special foods and dance, is always brisk at Alacitas which last about a week.

On my departure from Bolivia I was accorded their highest decoration, Condor of the Andes in the order of Gran Cruz, a satisfying honor, I thought, for one so vilified as I had been upon my arrival. While I refused when the government's intention was made known to me and so reported as US policy requires, Secretary Rogers instructed me to accept, saying that I had earned it. I happily did so at a ceremony attended by my colleague Ambassadors as well as by my wife and two daughters who I thought had more than “earned “it as well for the pressures and concerns they had endured in our first two years in Bolivia.

I also received another sort of “decoration” which pleased me very much. A musical novelty in Bolivia is the PENA (pronounced Penya), a performance in a small, intimate

night-spot where people gather to eat popcorn, drink beer or wine and listen to musical groups. The whole thing is youth oriented and while folkloric music is traditional there was also much “political protest” type lyrics, often aimed at the US and in the early days sometimes at me. In my first two years in Bolivia I did not go to the Pena, either the Koritiko or the Naira, the two best in La Paz.

However, in my last two years that changed and I was a frequent enthusiastic visitor to both. The outstanding group in Bolivia at the time, specializing in more modern themes and adaptations than in the traditional folkloric, was Los Caminantes who had star billing at the Koritika. In my last week in Bolivia the Camoinantes invited me and friends to a special, farewell program, dedicated to me. So even a representative youth group had come to see me as a friend, a very heartwarming event indeed.

One final note. As part of our support for the Banzer regime, and to facilitate his getting around the country a meeting with the people, we provided a Pilatus Porter STOL aircraft, the same as the ill-fated one provided in Peru. Banzer had wanted a helicopter but we thought this aircraft, capable of small fielding landing and at high altitude would be more useful and safer, and it proved so to be.

However, after I left Bolivia I learned that it too had been destroyed, but fortunately with no tragic results. It seems that the President's pilot always prudently prepared for flights with him by surveying proposed, unprepared landing sites in advance. On one such occasion he successfully landed at the locale but, with a wind shift, opted to takeoff in another direction and did not walk the line. Even though the aircraft required but a relatively short takeoff run, its nose wheel dropped into a weed-covered hole just before lift off and that was that for the airplane.

And so much for Bolivia—even though I could go on and on with illuminating stories. But, hopefully, what I've said gives the picture

Q: Well, your Bolivian experience was certainly colorful, eventful and productive. From there you were transferred to Uruguay in the summer of 1973. How would you contrast your experience there and what about the Tupamaros, the active terrorist group in that country?

SIRACUSA: To start with, there could hardly be two more different countries than Uruguay and Bolivia, which certainly illustrates the diversity of Latin America and the fallacy of so many Americans who lump these many countries together as though they were the same. A few comparisons can give the picture:

On the political level. Very small Uruguay, about 3 million people, is, together with Costa Rica, the country with the most consistent, truly democratic tradition in all of Latin America. Bolivia, by contrast, in spite of occasional, valiant efforts has scarcely known democracy. Whereas Uruguay's political history has been largely benign, Bolivia's has been largely brutal.

Uruguay has a highly literate populace all education through University is free), a homogeneous people mostly of Western European and largely Italian stock reflecting 19th century immigration), and virtually no remaining trace of the indigenous people who were eliminated in a brutal colonial era genocide. Bolivia's population, predominantly Indians of the Aymara and Quechua peoples, is largely illiterate and unassimilated into the body politic and even economic of the State while the smaller ruling class reflects far more of the Spanish colonial heritage and much less than does Uruguays of more recent immigration.

The geographies also could hardly be more different. Uruguay, a small and boringly flat pastureland, though beautiful in its way, is demarcated by rivers and by the sea. Landlocked Bolivia, many times larger, is spectacularly composed of the always snow-capped high Andean mountains (up to 23,000 ft.), the “altiplano” (high plateau at around 12,000 feet where most Bolivians live), and the semi-tropical Yungas on the eastern

slopes of the Andes just above the very tropical tributaries of the Amazon. About the only things Bolivia and Uruguay have in common are the Spanish language (though most Bolivians don't speak it) and borders with Brazil and Paraguay.

Uruguay's meat and wool-based agricultural economy, which once brought considerable wealth and high culture to the country, also contrasts vividly with Bolivia's once and still richness in metallic minerals, tin, silver, gold, etc., plus oil, gas and, unfortunately in today's world, the coca leaf. Ironically, while this wealth in resources has enriched others (Spain first and then the “tin barons”) it has not, however, brought prosperity and well-being to the populace in general. While Uruguay generally speaking, has been a country of relatively easy and comfortable living for most if not all of its inhabitants, in Bolivia existence can be harsh and punishing as it generally has been for the great majority of the inhabitants.

So to go from Bolivia to Uruguay was to experience CHANGE. But while Uruguay in contrast to Bolivia was well-off, in more recent years its own problems had been deep-seated and produced tragic consequences.

Among other things, socialist experimentation had burdened the economy with programs it could not afford and thus tended to impoverish the country. Also, ill-advised and egregiously uneconomic protectionism, seeking to create an industrial base as a source of jobs, enriched only a few while it drained the wealth of agriculture and left Uruguayans worse off and dreaming of past affluence now out of reach. Yet through it all the University poured into this economy of limited scope hordes of graduates—lawyers, engineers and doctors in droves— with little or no career opportunity awaiting, and many infected with a heavy dose of Marxist indoctrination to exacerbate the impact of their seemingly hopeless prospects.

So in the years before my arrival many of the frustrated youth either emigrated or acted out the radicalization of their university experience in which they had been influenced

not only by extremist and communist professors but where they had also fraternized with exiled, radical youth from other countries for whom Uruguay had become a haven, given its undiscriminating, democratic welcome mat and free education for all, even for such foreigners and no matter why they had fled their own countries.

In this environment the Tupamaro organization, beginning as a sugar-laborer revolt against their grievous exploitation in the northern cane fields, and led by Raul Sendic, was born. Initially there was much sympathy for the workers whose grievances were legitimate; but this changed as it metamorphosed from labor grievance through “Robinhood-like” criminal acts of social leveling to outright terrorism, kidnapping and murder.

In the course of this development and transformation the Tupamaros attracted not only the support of an elite group of educated persons—doctors, lawyers, engineers, professors, etc., but, sadly, it pulled into active membership many of the frustrated, idealistic and radically-influenced youth of many of the best families of Uruguay. And as they became criminally willing to kill and torture, guilt fell on them all, thus making their acts not only politically and socially disruptive but also a wrenching experience for all levels of Uruguayan society. The name, Tupamaro, is derived from a fabled Inca-era rebel, Tupac Amaru.

The sad result of Uruguay's eventual reaction to the Tupamaros was literally the destruction for a number of years of Uruguay's proud devotion to and practice of democracy. After many kidnappings, ransoms and murders the British Ambassador was held for months in a buried cage before his release and others, including prominent Uruguayans, suffered that fate as well. But not all were so lucky.

One member of the American Embassy, the father of nine children, was callously murdered. In a broadly circulated motion picture based on this case, State of Siege, the communist producer/director, Costa Graves, painted a cynically distorted picture of the actual circumstances in Uruguay and of the brutal murder of Dan Mitrione. Sadly, however,

the movie had its intended effect of helping to poison world opinion against Uruguay and the supposed role of the U.S. in that country.

The movie gave no insight at all into what had brought a country like Uruguay to the condition where terrorism could implant itself and thrive, and thus no understanding of the whole picture. One did not see here a country of decent people, democratic to a fault, many thought, which literally bared its breast to abuse and exploitation; nor was there any honest view of the United States, acting on the noble vision of Kennedy's Alliance for Progress with the sole objective of promoting in Uruguay, as elsewhere in Latin America, economic and social progress in a democratic framework. Where in Costa Graves' picture was the reality of the United States which saw its own reward for altruistic policies, backed by substantial resources, only in the betterment of the political, economic and social condition of others. But when were communists ever concerned for the truth?

For the record it should be noted that Dan Mitrione was an American police officer who had been recruited by AID Agency for International Development) to serve in the Alliance for Progress Public Safety Program. Such programs were a part of our programs in virtually every country in Latin America. They were designed to train local police forces in modern methods deemed needed to help preserve stability in light of the surge of expectations in rapidly transforming societies which were the goal of the program.

The mission was not to teach torture, oppression and brutal methods of interrogation, as Costa Graves would have believed from his portrayal; far from it and just the opposite—in fact, US officers were not allowed by our own rules to participate in any interrogations of suspects. And, whatever American police officers might be, often not honored for some acts in their own country, it should be clear that no country in Latin America, Uruguay included, or anywhere for that matter) need ask Yankees for advice on brutality—the homegrown variety having always been more than sufficient. The US objective, in short, was to make local police not only more efficient and effective, for the stated reasons, but also more humane.

The turning point for Tupamaro terror came no only from the virtual paralysis of Uruguay's proud legal system and tradition (judges and their families were threatened with death when dealing with captured Tupamaros) but finally from the national outrage caused by their cold-blooded murder of four simple conscripts standing sentry duty in the city of Montevideo. If they sensed guilt from whatever early grievances may have given rise to the Tupamaros, ordinary citizens could not see it belonging to such victims as these, simple country people called to national service. The people were finally outraged and action was demanded.

In response, the apolitical Uruguayan military, which traditionally did not count for much in a peaceful country surrounded by overwhelmingly large neighbors Argentina and Brazil) was called to action in lieu of police forces proven totally ineffectual and incapable of dealing with this new threat. And when they finally acted they did so with a vengeance such that with superior force they eventually broke the back of the Tupamaro organization and imprisoned Sendic and most of the leaders, especially the most important ones. Altogether, several thousand Tupamaros or suspected Tupamaros were arrested and thereafter the wheels of military-dominated justice moved slowly and without doubt to some extent abusively, thus eventually leading to harsh accusations against Uruguay by organizations such as Amnesty International and others.

As for the military as an institution, having assumed power in a most untraditional way, they saw themselves as saviors of the nation and they were not about to give up power until, as they saw it, the threat had been definitively purged. Yet an outright military dictatorship as such was too untraditional for a country such as Uruguay. Therefore, in a controlled election, Juan Bordaberry, a thoroughly decent, typical upper middle-class Uruguayan rancher/politician was installed as President; but of course, the real power remained with the military.

Bordaberry, who in many ways reminded me of Belaunde in Peru because of his human qualities and social class, did his honest best to carry out a moderating civilian rule to the

extent practical and permitted and to try to move the country back toward its cherished democracy. Such was the situation when I arrived in Uruguay in late August, 1973, and presented my credentials.

In this first meeting, Bordaberry, fully aware of US concerns for human rights and of the anti-Uruguayan sentiment generated in part by the distortions of the mentioned motion picture, made a direct appeal to me for understanding of the situation in which he found himself and for our help in moving the country in the direction he wanted which was a return to full democracy as soon as possible and practicable. He said he had to deal with the military, which still felt it had a vital internal security role to play, and that his best chance to have influence with them would be to the extent he could help them receive some of the equipment they felt they desperately needed. He was asking for action on the relatively modest military assistance program which had been developed with our military missions there and which in no way involved excessive or sophisticated weapons.

As I had told General Banzer in Bolivia two years before, I said nothing I could do would substitute for positive action by Uruguay to eliminate grounds for criticism of its treatment of prisoners, political and criminal. And that justified or not the task would be harder because of the bad image already created. I said I would try to help him by delivering the same message, as forcefully as I could, in all my contacts with military and police officials and would make recommendations to my own government in accordance with the response I seemed to be getting. I also stressed that whatever positive position I might be able to take would quickly change on evidence of real abuse. Bordaberry said he understood this and would do his best—and I so reported to my government.

Thereafter, and through my nearly four years in Uruguay, I and my most effective DCM, James C. Haahr, as well as our very able military group personnel met with some frequency with the military leadership, in Montevideo and also with the important regional army commanders, and our message was invariably the same: respect human rights and return Uruguay to democracy as soon as possible so as not to sully the good which had

been done by their timely intervention in a time of dire need. I also believe that through our various resources for intelligence gathering, overt and covert, we were very well and objectively informed, certainly better we thought than were many motivated organizations that made outrageous and unjustified accusations against Uruguay.

At one point, for example, Amnesty International, in 1976, I believe, classified Uruguay as the most abusive of human rights in the world!!!! Can you imagine—in a world holding the Shah in Iran, Marcos in the Philippines staunch allies of ours) and God knows how many abusive Idi Amin types in Africa, Uruguay could be so classified by those having no appreciation whatsoever for what had pushed this unhappy, decent little country into a condition it never wanted and was so un-natural to it.

Certainly there was some abuse but there were those who deplored and tried to control it—from the President on down. And for our part, there was no hesitation in telling the President and the military commanders when we had what we believed to be accurate information as to such, including the names of certain military officers of intermediate rank reputed to be the most serious abusers.

In our view Uruguay as an always leading practitioner of democracy in Latin America deserved, in its hours of travail, not only our pressure for betterment but also the understanding and even compassion for its plight of the world's foremost democracy. Seeing Uruguay as it actually was insofar as we could discover the truth and so reporting it was deemed to be our obligation as an Embassy. And so we did this rather than join the carping and criticism along with the popular flow stimulated by “human rights” activists in Washington and elsewhere and the exaggerations and distortions of the critics mentioned above.

(After the Vietnam War, many of the activists who had unrelentingly badgered Washington for its policies, found new cause for their energies in the problem of Human Rights; and many of them dove into it with undiscriminating vengeance which often honored

sensationalism over truth. Thus, sadly, anyone who questioned them for exaggeration and trumpeting of unsubstantiated “fact” became targets for derision and worse. And thus the noble cause of promoting human rights everywhere, which properly became a strong arm of American Foreign Policy, was comedy at times reduced to open carping and scolding, while those who believed more could be gained by “quiet diplomacy” were often pilloried and vilified. So, the price for integrity.

Thus integrity in reporting (how much easier to go with the flow and conform to the conventional view, however inaccurate) had its price in bringing down the wrath of such activists and even members of Congress such as Koch of New York (later Hizzoner the Mayor) who was riding the tide for all it was worth. Koch, it might be noted, was especially unpopular among military circles in Uruguay as author of the “Koch Amendment” to the Foreign Assistance Act which singled out Uruguay for denial of military aid because of its supposed egregious record on human rights.

As for Koch, who gave his special, wrathful attention, to Uruguay and later to me, I have a special comment. In late 1976 or early 77 I asked to see him and journeyed to New York for that purpose where he received me in his office. I had maybe an hour and a half or two hours with him and found him seemingly to be most reasonable and straightforward in his apparent interest in the subject. I tried to give him the most honest and objective picture of the actual situation in Uruguay that I could, warts and all where justified. Such a picture, it was clear, was not the same as the one from which many of his comments had emanated but I operated on the assumption that he was interested in the truth and thus might give some weight to my objective presentation.

Alas, as I was to find out, there was no sincerity in spite of appearances; and, although I left his office feeling some progress had been made in giving him at least a different perspective to contemplate, such was not the case in fact. Looking back I feel that Uruguay, while meaning a lot to me as the US Ambassador to that country, was really only

of passing interest to Koch who was riding the tide of human rights activities for his own political purposes and not much more.

When, before leaving, I naively invited him to come to Uruguay as my guest (assuming he was really interested) so he could see for himself and carry out whatever investigation he desired, he asked whether I thought he would be safe. I replied that he would be as safe as I was as, to the extent he wished, I would be at his side at all times and that my guards would protect him as they did me. I suppose he was never serious as, although we parted on a cordial note—he was always the genial host of my visit to his office—I never heard from him again except for a violent personal attack he made on me (expressing satisfaction at my departure). When my retirement was announced after the Carter administration came in.

If he thought, which I doubt, that his attacks on me had led to the end of my career he was quite mistaken as I had actually retired from the Foreign Service in March of 1974 and stayed on thereafter only at the “pleasure of the President”, fully intending to come home after 37-1/2 years of service credit at the change of administration no matter who won. With this much service there were many reasons why I had retired and wanted to come home, not the least of which was the utter lack of privacy of such a public life, weariness with the unending social demands, and the need for me and my family to be under constant guard for almost eight years. And the State Department met the one condition I had requested, that my retirement be kept confidential until I was actually ready to go as I did not want to operate in a “lame duck” capacity. It was thus a great surprise to my staff when, after the Carter Administration first announced its plans for Latin America that I was listed as one to be replaced as I had “already retired.”

But to return to Bordaberry, I am convinced that during all the time he was in office he was deposed by the military about a year before I left Uruguay in 1977) he did his utmost to apply his high principles to developments in his country. And the same goes for his most attractive and capable Foreign Minister, Juan Manuel Blanco. I have no hesitancy

in saying that these two gentlemen, both deeply devoted to the traditions of Uruguayan principles of democracy, rank high in my opinion for honesty and integrity among all leaders I have met in my long career in Latin America.

All too much my contacts were with military leadership or, if civilian, with persons not comparing with these two and with other Uruguayan civilians. In Latin America, because of what they are and of their history, Uruguayans are truly special. Upon Bordaberry's ouster he was replaced with a very elderly gentleman, Demichelli, who despite his intentions was really out of it insofar as government influence was concerned, for lack of vigor if for no other reason. Bordaberry had done his best and with some effect, given the circumstances; and, when his efforts made the military too uncomfortable they got rid of him. Thereafter, and until some years later when the military, having failed as they always do, took steps to return the country to full democracy, civilian leadership of the government was almost purely a sham.

Q: Its pretty obvious that you mission in Uruguay was dominated by the question of human rights and I suppose this affected programs as well.

SIRACUSA: Indeed it did. In contrast to my previous posts we had very little in the way of programs. A very small AID mission and program, a virtually phased out AIFLD (there was little we could do where labor was dominated and not free under the military influence) and a dwindling to nothing military assistance program. Thus we put emphasis on cultural programs, through an excellent and very active binational center and library, on showing concern in all ways we could for the Uruguayan people, and in sparing no effort at all levels to influence the government, military and civilian, to move back toward the democracy for which Uruguay had always been so justly admired and to clean up grounds for human rights criticism by restoring constitutional rights to imprisoned persons, bringing to prompt and open trials, etc. We also maintained active, open and above board contact with all elements of the political opposition, social and otherwise, so as to be exposed to their points of view, to learn from them and to offer counsel, advice and moral support.

A sad fact of Uruguayan life, the country being so small and the trauma of terrorism so pervasive, was that hardly anyone was spared—everyone seemed to be touched emotionally and concretely by the fact that family members, friends or acquaintances were held as Tupamaros or collaborators; some clearly had been devoted to terrorism and rejection of family and friends; others seemingly just caught up in the tide just caught up in the tide with greater or lesser guilt or, doubtless in many cases, none at all or not much more than bad luck or indiscretion. This tended to split society which, while condemning terrorism and approving the need to overcome it, was nonetheless appalled by the apparent injustice of the slow process of healing the country's wounds. Thus, as time went on, the people became more and more restive with military rule, openly critical of it and anxious for a return to their democratic political customs and practices. By the time I left, in April of 1977, the handwriting was on the wall for military rule but a few years more would be required to more or less restore the situation as before.

Q: How did your personal situation, in terms of security, contrast with what you experienced in your last year in Peru and especially in Bolivia.

SIRACUSA: Well, it was quite different but I and my family were nonetheless required to observe strict security rules.

When the full force of the Tupamaro threat was felt, by my predecessor, Ambassador Charles Adair, several years before I arrived, security rules and requirements became so strict that he was for a while a virtual prisoner in his residence. A well-trained force of chauffeurs and guards was created, the residence was brilliantly flood-lighted at night and nighttime K-9 guard-dog service established. I found all this in place when I arrived but with the added requirement for guarding my two daughters, which Ambassador Adair did not have, and, of course, my wife.

Soon after I arrived I softened some of the requirements first by eliminating the all night long brilliant floodlighting of the residence and its grounds, reasoning that normal exterior

lighting plus the dogs and guard procedures were enough, as they proved to be. I am a great believer in the value of light as a security measure: but it was a relief to eliminate the flood lighting, except for occasional tests.

But while the Tupamaro threat was largely controlled, the capacity for random terrorism was not and the American Ambassador and his family were clear targets so the procedures must be followed and were. My view was that if the American government was investing much money and effort for security protection, the Ambassador and his family had the clear obligation to cooperate; and so we did. There was always, as well, the uncomfortable thought of how awful it would be to re-experience the ordeal of the British Ambassador or worse, or still worse, the thought of my wife and or daughters being taken.

Only two weeks after my arrival in Uruguay there was a clear reminder that the threat was not over. On a Saturday afternoon there was a violent explosion in the nearby faculty of engineering of the University when bomb-making operations in progress, under cover of university immunity, came to grief. There was considerable devastation and immediately in its aftermath the government made one of its better decisions. Within an hour or less after the explosion they through open the faculty building to public and press visitation and scrutiny so the people could see for themselves what was going on in the guise of education. And the fact that they did it so quickly made it clear that there was no government stage-managing. It was a sobering event and led to several years of intervention o the Universities cherished “fuero” or immunity.

One footnote to concerns for my security. On a visit to Washington about mid-way in my tenure I was invited to luncheon in McLean by General Walters, Deputy head of the Agency whom I had known in Rome. After others had gone a high official said they wanted me to help with a security experiment by wearing a special belt which could emit a radio signal if I were to be kidnapped and thus enable my location to be pin-pointed. I told him I did not think much of the idea as I could only see it as a danger to me and a sure invitation to my killing should the belt be discovered. However, I was persuaded to go for a fitting.

Upon my return to post I told my station chief to inform his agency to please drop the idea as I could see no good in it. I was surprised, therefore, to learn a few weeks later that the belt had arrived. Upon seeing it, quite handsome but in my opinion absolutely sure to be discovered, I refused ever to wear it and had it returned to Washington. Before that happened, however, the Attach# plane from Buenos Aires was engaged to make several fly-overs to see if they could locate the belt. I never asked for the outcome but hope and assume the whole idea was dropped—but it must have cost a few bucks to create the beautifully stamped and electronically- rigged belt and try it out.

A final comment on security. It is hard on the nerves of family who must bravely ignore its ever-present reality and inherent menace. Also, it is terribly hard for children to be set apart from their peers by guards and doubly hard for teenage girls of a dating age.

Q: Speaking of family, would you care to comment on the role played by your wife, especially in your more senior positions?

SIRACUSA: I am glad you asked as I realize I have talked a lot about myself and official concerns. Something should be said about the indispensable contribution made to my career and our representation of the United States by Jacq Bachman Siracusa.

She served, I might add, in another era when women did not expect to be compensated, as today, and voluntarily performed their myriad functions as an essential half of a husband and wife team. The Foreign Service in those days surely did get two for the price of one, and the more talented and capable the wife, as in my case, her contribution may easily have counted for one and a half or maybe two of that of her husband. Add to this the responsibilities of a mother, meeting the demands of her children from infancy through the terrible teens—balancing their needs with social responsibilities which all too often denied any evening, family social contact, and you can begin to see the pressures and demands on such women.

In my case, Jacq was not only a talented person with unquenchable intellectual curiosity and scholarship in may fields, but she was also a superb linguist (French, Spanish, Portuguese most importantly, but also German and some Russian) and a good, empathetic listener. She listened to people and they responded to her like bees to honey and she often became confidant and confessor—helping others to cope with the strains and pressures of their lives, often and especially the junior wives in our Service.

She was also drawn to service of the afflicted and underprivileged—far too many in many countries to even try to recount—like the emotionally afflicted adopted daughter of a NASA officer in Peru, with whom, it seemed, only Jacq could strike a chord of understanding; or her anthropological interests which led her to close association with missionary groups in the Amazonian jungles of Peru and Bolivia, where she was affectionately known as “Aunt Jacq” and by some as “Jungle Jacq” by some; or little Henry, in Bolivia whose' eye saving Laser treatment in News York would never have happened without her devotion and hard work; or blind Maria Sagreda, a young women in a terrible shelter afflicted with Retinitis Pigmentosa who found in Jacq a person to whom she could turn for spiritual and material solace and help; or in Uruguay, her work with a saintly priest, Father Zacarello, at an institution for mentally, emotional and physically afflicted castoffs of all ages, providing supplies of all kinds including tires when needed for the padres' station wagon; inviting young Daniel, incurable suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease to the Residence for tea and then to the nearby stadium for football, borne to the event by Jacq's personal bodyguards and chauffeur. This list could go on and on, but what I've said, I believe, gives the idea.

And then, on another level, being hostess, formal and sometimes informal, to Presidents, Prime Ministers, Cabinet officers, military and civilian, Foreign Ambassadors and their wives and staffs, the local American and host country business and community leaders, including the clergy, leaders in the arts, in music, painting, literature and on and on and you name it. This aspect requires not only social skills of a high order, but also protocolary balancing acts to be something to all while avoiding slights, real and perceived. And

lastly, the need to be the moral supporter, counselor, sounding board and confidant of her husband, and sometimes the firm hand to prevent him from doing or saying something foolish.

Yes, all of this and more; and lest we forget, also the demands of her children. Too much cannot be said in praise of the Foreign Service wife, caste in the mold of Jacq Siracusa, of which ladies, too much cannot be said in their praise.

To recognize this, since Jacq did not even receive a teacup from a grateful government on retirement (I, after all, received a lapel button and the American and Ambassadorial flags) to honor her for her work, I funded a perpetual scholarship to be given in her name annually by the American Foreign Service Association, to students needing financial help; and to keep my own name at least minimally alive in an organization in which I was honored and proud to serve for over 37 # years, I established one also in my own name.

End of interview